

ELLEN TERRY

AND
HER IMPERSONATIONS



AN APPRECIATION

BY

CHARLES HIATT

AUTHOR OF "PICTURE POSTERS" ETC.



LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

1898

1907 MAR 21

PREFACE

THE present volume pretends to be neither a personal biography nor an essay in criticism. Its sole aim is to give an accurate account of the theatrical career of Miss Ellen Terry, though it goes without saying that some personal details have of necessity been included. These have, however, been reduced to an absolute minimum, and the book will be found faithful to its title in so far as it is almost wholly devoted to the impersonations by which Miss Terry has obtained her immense popularity here and in America. Although a vast amount has been written about her, it is believed that no book covering the same ground has hitherto been published. Almost every part which she has played from childhood upwards receives mention, and special stress

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAITS OF MISS ELLEN TERRY

	TO FACE PAGE
A RECENT PORTRAIT	<i>Frontispiece</i>
AS CUPID IN "ENDYMION"	16
AN EARLY PORTRAIT (1865)	38
AS PORTIA	68
AS OPHELIA	102
AS QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA IN "CHARLES I."	122
AS IOLANTHE	144
AS CAMMA IN "THE CUP"	148
AS LETITIA HARDY IN "THE BELLE'S STRATA- GEM"	158
AS JULIET	162
WITH MRS. STIRLING IN "ROMEO AND JULIET"	166
AS VIOLA	176
WITH SIR HENRY IRVING IN "OLIVIA"	184
AS MARGARET	186
AS MARGARET	188
AS PEGGY IN "RAISING THE WIND"	192

GEORGE BELL & SONS

LONDON: YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN
NEW YORK: 66, FIFTH AVENUE, AND
BOMBAY: 53, ESPLANADE ROAD
CAMBRIDGE: DEIGHTON, BELL & CO.



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY.

CHISWICK PRESS :—CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

PREFACE

is laid upon the work of her early career. The opinions of some of her innumerable critics are here condensed and commented upon, a course deemed preferable to the writing of an appreciation which should be merely the opinion of the author. The illustrations have been specially chosen from the great quantity of photographs of Miss Terry which have been taken. They cover the whole range of her imperishable creations, and are thought to be essentially characteristic of the great artist whom they represent. The thanks of the writer are due to Sir Henry Irving, who has kindly consented to the reproduction of Sargent's portrait of Miss Terry as Macbeth. The cover to the volume has been specially designed by Mr. George Craig.

CHARLES HIA

LONDON,

November, 1898.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FA	PA
AS ELLALINE IN "THE AMBER HEART"	I	
AS LADY MACBETH, AFTER THE PAINTING BY J. S. SARGENT, R.A.	2	
AS LADY MACBETH	2	
WITH MR. GORDON CRAIG IN "THE DEAD HEART"	2	
AS LUCY ASHTON IN "RAVENSWOOD"	2	
WITH MISS AILSA CRAIG IN "HENRY VIII."	2	
AS CORDELIA	2	
AS FAIR ROSAMUND IN "BECKET"	2	
AS NANCE OLDFIELD	2	
AS GUINEVERE IN "KING ARTHUR"	2	
AS IMOGEN	2	
AS IMOGEN	2	
AS MADAME SANS-GÊNE	2	
AS MADAME SANS-GÊNE	2	
AS SYLVIA WYNFORD IN "THE MEDICINE MAN"	2	

ELLEN TERRY

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

THE dramatic associations of "that shire which we the heart of England well may call," to use the phrase of Michael Drayton, are incomparably splendid by reason of the birth of Shakespeare within the borders. But side by side with this overwhelming name, we find that more than one of the Elizabethan worthies of Warwickshire were considerable figures in the theatrical life of their day. On the 17th of May, 1603, it is recorded that a company including, amongst others, William Shakespeare, Laurence Fletcher, Richard Burbage, Augustine Phillips, William Sly, Robert Armin, Richard Cowlye, John Hemmings,

ELLEN TERRY

Henrie Condell, and their associates had, under the Privy Seal, "the warrant to use and exercise the arte and faculty of playing comedies, tragedies, enterludes, histories, moralls, pastorals, stage-plaies, and such-like, as they have already studied, or hereafter shall use or studie, as well for the recreation of our lovinge subjects as for our solace and pleasure . . . as well within their now usuall howse called the Globe, within our County of Surreye, as also within anie town halls or mote halls, or other convenient places within the liberties and freedome of anie other citie, university, towne, or borough whatsoever within our said realms and dominions." Of these actors dead and gone, who were associated with Shakespeare in his early theatrical enterprise, it has been claimed that more than one was a native of the poet's own town. Local historians to this day insist that the most famous of them all, Richard Burbage, was born at Stratford-on-Avon, and that he was Shakespeare's school-

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

fellow at the grammar school of that place. Unfortunately there is no trustworthy evidence that Burbage was in any way connected with Stratford, or any other place in Warwickshire, and the county which has produced the greatest of all dramatists has no real claim to the greatest tragedian of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Burbage, the actor who, of all others, was most remarkable from the fact that he was afforded prodigious opportunities, and had sufficient art and energy to rise to the level of them, was more probably born in London than in the tranquil little town through which the Avon has its silver way. But if Warwickshire cannot count as one of her sons the great tragedian who was the first to realize the tremendous creations of Shakespeare's imagination, it can boast in Ellen Terry, the actress who in our own time is most intimately associated with the impersonation of Shakespeare's heroines, and who, chiefly by means of those impersonations, has gained

ELLEN TERRY

enormous popularity wherever the English tongue is spoken. It is the object of this book to trace step by step the artistic career of Ellen Terry, and to reproduce in part and discuss the criticism which her performances have called forth.

It was at Coventry, on the 27th of February, 1848, that Ellen Terry, or Ellen Alicia Terry, to use her full name for the first and last time in these pages, was born. In the history of the English drama the ancient and curiously picturesque Warwickshire city has played a part of very considerable distinction. The Coventry Mysteries, or Corpus Christi Plays, are, of course, familiar to all students of old English dramatic literature. With what elaboration they were prepared we can appreciate by glancing at the illustrations to Thomas Sharp's well-known dissertation on the subject, in which the scenery, dresses of the actors, and some of the incidents of the mysteries are delineated fully and graphically. The widespread fame of these

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

mediæval pageants, which were abolished at the Reformation, and the profit which they consequently brought to the townspeople, had no doubt a good deal to do with the establishment of the Godiva Procession, which was founded in the reign of Charles II. "In 1677," says an old local handbook, "the Procession at the Great Fair was first instituted, and it has descended to our time with no very material alteration. At that period a female, intended to represent the benevolent Patroness of the City, was procured to ride in the cavalcade." The fair and the procession have alike fallen on evil days since the above was written, and in spite of occasional fitful attempts to revive their glories, it is little likely that they will ever resume their old importance. On the 26th of November, 1773, at Trinity Church, the spire of which is one of the group of three which forms so conspicuous and characteristic a feature in the outline of Coventry, Sarah Kemble, the greatest

ELLEN TERRY

of English tragic actresses, was married to William Siddons. The vicar at that time was Joseph Rann, who may well have been in sympathy with the young players, for he had published an important annotated edition of Shakespeare's plays in six volumes. According to an old list of the principal events in the history of the town, "On Easter Monday, 1819, the new Theatre, in Smithford-street, built by Sir S. Rew, Knt., was opened by Mr. Penley's Company of Comedians from Windsor. It is a commodious brick building, and contains a pit, a circular row of boxes, and a gallery." Commodious or not, this theatre has recently been found insufficient for the wants of modern Coventry, and, a new one having lately been built, it has been converted to other uses.

In the February of 1848, Benjamin Terry and his wife fulfilled an engagement at the old theatre, and during their visit Ellen Terry was born. Her parents were both actors of distinction in their day.

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

Benjamin Terry was born in 1818, and, joining the theatrical profession at a comparatively early age, rapidly won popularity at various towns in the provinces. At Edinburgh he was so conspicuously successful that he gained the approval of Charles Kean, with whom he subsequently played in London. Among his parts were Cardinal D'Alby in "Louis IX." and the Duke of Norfolk in "King Henry VIII." He was also one of the band of able actors that Macready gathered round him during his memorable management. For many years previous to his death on the 22nd of May, 1892, Mr. Terry had retired from the stage, but up to the last he was an inveterate "first-nighter," and continued to take intense interest in his old pursuit. Mrs. Terry, who had the reputation of being an excellent actress in her time, died on the 1st of March, 1892. In what house or what street in Coventry Ellen Terry first saw the light she does not know herself. As a result of this ignorance, a little

ELLEN TERRY

war of Terry birthplaces has been waged in the old town, the chief combatants being two tradesmen in Market Street. There is little doubt that the birthplace is in Market Street, a narrow thoroughfare close to the theatre, in which it has been a custom to let theatrical lodgings since the beginning of the century. The distinction would seem to lie between No. 5 and No. 26 in the street, and on the whole the better case seems to have been made out for the former, which, at the time of Ellen Terry's birth, was an eating-house at which lodgings were let to the performers at the neighbouring theatre.

Ellen Terry is the second child of her parents. Before we begin the proper business of this book, it may be convenient briefly to note the remarkable theatrical careers of her brothers and sisters. It is safe to say that no family in the history of the modern English stage can count amongst its members so many men and women possessing histrionic talent of a high order.

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

Concerning the theatrical career of Kate Terry, the eldest child of this gifted family, an entire book of high interest might be written. It must suffice here to relate in a few words the main incidents in the public life of one of the leading emotional actresses of the Victorian period. Born in 1844, Kate Terry made her first appearance on the stage at the Princess's Theatre, under the management of Charles Kean, in 1851, when she took the part of Robin in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." From this time onward she played the juvenile parts in all those productions of the Kean management in which there was an opening for her with such success that at length she became recognized as without a rival as a child actress. Of her impersonation of Arthur in "King John" in the revival of that play at the Princess's in 1852, "The Times" said: "Here and there marks of training might be traced in this little girl; but she was much more easy and natural than is usually the case with juvenile

ELLEN TERRY

performers." Amongst those who expressed admiration for this impersonation was Lord Macaulay. Five years later Kate Terry played Ariel in "The Tempest," and the following year had her first great chance when the character of Cordelia in "King Lear" was assigned to her. The critic of "The Athenæum" on this occasion remarked that "Miss Kate Terry, who supported the character of the good daughter, deserves praise for the simple, beautiful style in which she expressed the natural feelings proper to the situations assigned to her in this wonderful drama." The same journal, alluding to her impersonation of the small part of the Boy belonging to the Pistol group of characters at the end of the first act of "Henry V.," describes it as the gem of the performance. From the Princess's Theatre, after filling various engagements in the provinces, Miss Terry went to the Lyceum to join Fechter, playing Ophelia to his Hamlet, as well as Viola in "Twelfth Night." Subsequently she

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

“created” important parts in dramas by Tom Taylor, Leicester Buckingham, and Dion Boucicault at the Adelphi, where she played the title-part in Charles Reade’s adaptation of Tennyson’s “Dora.” Her Julia in “The Hunchback,” by Sheridan Knowles, was a distinct triumph. Of all her Shakespearean performances her Juliet was the most widely appreciated. Miss Kate Terry’s theatrical career was cut short by her engagement to marry Mr. Arthur Lewis.

Her farewell of the stage at the Adelphi Theatre on the 31st of August, 1867, when “Romeo and Juliet” was performed, was one of the most memorable scenes in the history of the modern theatre. The reception which was accorded her may be judged from the following extract from the description given in “The Times” of the 2nd of September: “Again Miss Terry was recalled, and again she appeared to receive the loud and long-continued plaudits of the crowd. Then the stalls began to clear.

ELLEN TERRY

But the storm of voices and clapping of hands continued from pit, boxes, and gallery through the overture of the farce, swelling till it threatened to grow into a tempest. The curtain rose for the farce; still the thunder roared. One of the actors, quite inaudible in the clamour, began the performance, but the roar grew louder and louder, till at last Mr. Phillips came on in the dress of Friar Lawrence, and, with a stolidity so well assumed that it seemed perfectly natural, asked, in the stereotyped phrase of the theatre, the pleasure of the audience. 'Kate Terry!' was the reply from a chorus of a thousand stentorian voices; and then the fair favourite of the night appeared once more, pale, and dressed to leave the theatre, and, when the renewed roar of recognition had subsided, in answer to her appealing dumb show, spoke with pathetic effect a few hesitating words, evidently the inspiration of the moment, but more telling than any set speech, to this effect: 'How I wish, from my heart, I

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

could tell you how I feel your kindness—not to-night only, but through the many years of my professional life! What can I say to you but thanks, thanks, and good-bye?'" That in the long interval which Miss Kate Terry spent away from the foot-lights she had not been altogether out of the minds of old playgoers was proved some months ago, when she reappeared at the Globe Theatre, a step to which she was induced by the strong entreaties of Mr. John Hare, of whose company her daughter, Miss Mabel Terry-Lewis, was a member.

The third of the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Terry, Miss Marion Terry, is amongst the most charming of living English actresses. Her resemblance to her sister Ellen in face and in voice is at times positively startling. That she has derived much of her artistic inspiration from her sister there can be no doubt; but it would be doing her a great injustice to suggest that her style is in any sense imitative.

ELLEN TERRY

Her individuality is too deep and too strong for that to be the case. Indeed, her method suggests to me that of Mrs. Kendal rather than that of Miss Ellen Terry, in spite of the likeness of which I have spoken.

Miss Marion Terry made her first appearance at one of the Manchester theatres in the summer of 1873, and appeared in London at the Olympic Theatre in a play called "A Game of Romps" later in the same year. Her exquisitely sympathetic voice, her personal grace, which seems quite unconscious of its gracefulness, her remarkable delicacy of touch soon made themselves felt, and Miss Marion Terry speedily took a high place in her profession. It was not, however, until Mr. George Alexander produced Mr. Carton's "Sunlight and Shadow" at the Avenue Theatre that we realized to the full the actress's rare qualities. In this play she had a part which was entirely congenial to her, and, without paying her the poor compliment of

BIRTH AND BIRTHPLACE

flattery, it may be said at once that no other living actress could have played it so faultlessly. Miss Marion Terry's association with Mr. Alexander was, speaking of course artistically, a wholly fortunate one, and every playgoer regretted that it came to an end so soon. In "Liberty Hall," another of Mr. Carton's plays, Miss Terry again gave us the full measure of her power to represent deep yet restrained emotion. But, in fact, she does nothing which is undistinguished, nothing which is touched with the common. The gravest of her faults is undoubtedly her too frequent absence from the bill.

Miss Florence Terry, the youngest of the four sisters, made her *début* in June, 1870, in Charles Reade's version of Molière's "Le Malade Imaginaire," entitled "The Robust Invalid." She was the original Little Nell in Halliday's play of that title produced at the Olympic Theatre on the 19th of November in the same year. When Irving produced "The Iron Chest,"

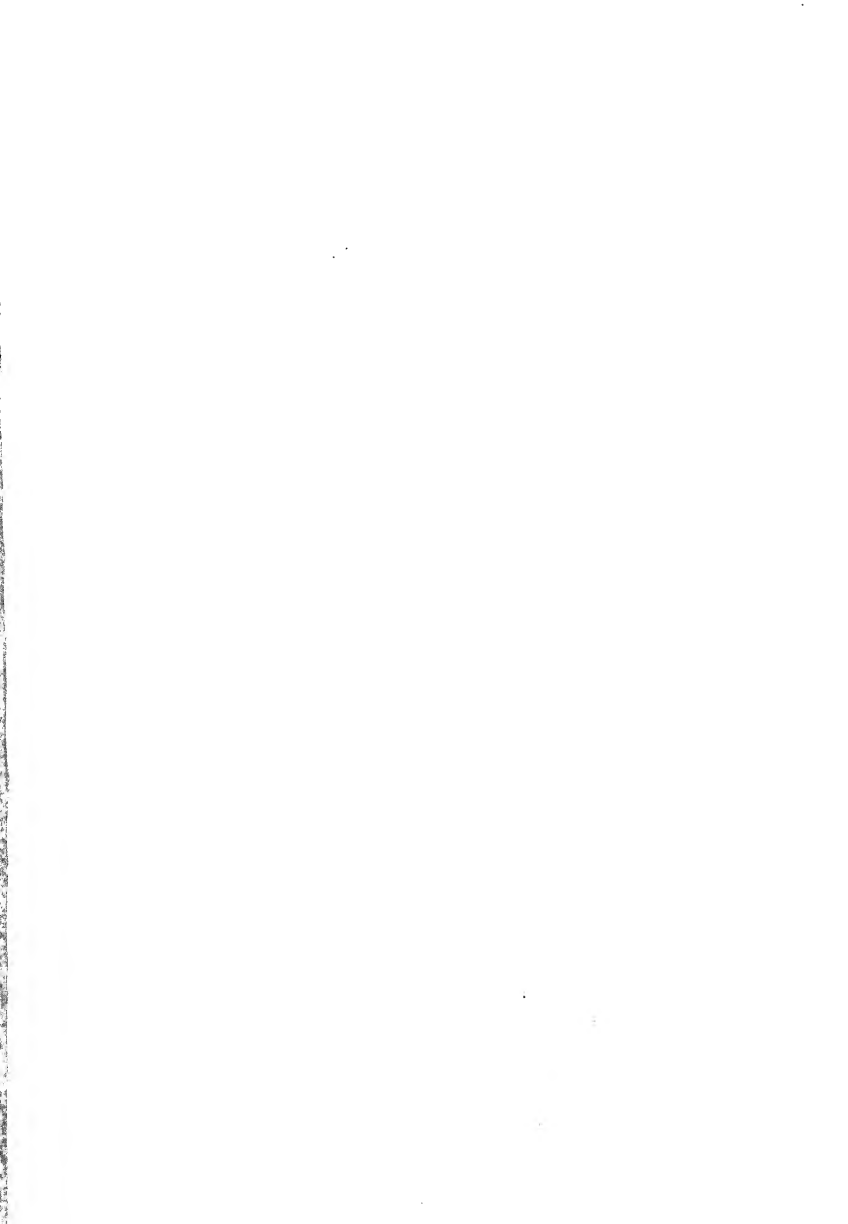
ELLEN TERRY

at the Lyceum Theatre, Miss Florence Terry played the part of Lady Helen. She soon after left the stage and married. She died some two years ago. Mr. Charles Terry, one of the sons of Mr. Benjamin Terry, has devoted himself to theatrical management. His daughter Minnie, however, has gained such success as a child actress as to recall the juvenile triumphs of her aunts Kate and Ellen. Mr. Fred Terry is well known to all playgoers. All that need be said of him is that he is still young enough to make an already successful career a really important one.



H. N. King, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "CUPID" IN "ENDYMION."



CHAPTER II

EARLY DAYS

DAUGHTER, as she was, of an actor and actress, and sister of a little girl who was already winning a child's triumphs on the stage, it was in the nature of things that Ellen Terry should pursue the calling of her parents. Not a thought was given to any other career for her. It was taken for granted that, almost as soon as she could walk and talk, she should appear behind the footlights : she was predestined to the stage. Such, among theatrical people, was the severe practice of the middle of the present century, a practice which, perhaps by reason of its severity, produced the most admirable results. It is the fashion in these days to dogmatize lightly on the training of the actor. The question is one

ELLEN TERRY

upon which everybody, even the most uninformed, holds himself entitled to an opinion : the occasional purchase of a stall is sufficient to constitute him an authority. We hear unceasingly of the advantages and disadvantages of a conservatoire. The discussion of the matter returns with the regularity of the seasons, and invariably fails to lead to any practical result. On the one hand, it is urged that if the art of acting is to continue to exist in this country—if the splendid tradition of Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, Macready, and the rest of the immortals is not to perish utterly in our midst—the establishment of a national training school of acting is an absolute necessity. On the other hand, it is prophesied that, should a conservatoire in any shape or form be introduced, we may forthwith bid a long farewell to all our greatness. A dramatic school, it is argued, would crush individuality and become the parent of nameless horrors. It would be impertinent indeed in so unambitious a

EARLY DAYS

book as this to dogmatize on a subject which regularly exercises many eminent pens, but at least it may be pointed out that the case for a conservatoire, as any reader who follows this narrative may see for himself, is now in a very different position from that which it occupied at the time when Ellen Terry made her first appearance as a child of eight. Her art is, of course, in the first place, the outcome of a great and rare natural gift, but it has been developed and perfected in a conservatoire which, however rough, is the most practical of all—that is to say, experience unceasing and of infinite variety. Since the fifties, for good or for ill, the entire theatrical system of England has been revolutionized, and it is now utterly impossible in this country to obtain the quantity and diversity of opportunity which Ellen Terry had in the first twenty years of her theatrical life. She went through the mill, as did all the players of her time. Now that the old order has changed, there

ELLEN TERRY

is practically no mill through which the budding actor can go, no matter how heroically prepared he may be for the discipline. And the mill was no kindly or easy machine. That at times it was uncommonly like an instrument of torture any student of the theatrical history of the period will at once agree. It was, no doubt, an ordeal by fire, but those who came through it unscathed were refined by inestimable experiences. It gave us Irving, Wyndham, Hare, and many others of our best : we owe to it, besides Ellen Terry, such superb actresses as Mrs. Kendal and Lady Bancroft. That we have fine actors who have never graduated in a stock company it would be foolish to deny. The capacity of self-education is a frequent attribute of great talent : some men are sufficiently strong to prescribe for themselves a course of ordered study, and to carry out their prescription to the letter. But these in any age and in any art are few and far between. In most men of

EARLY DAYS

ordinary ability the power of self-education is wanting. It was to the average actor, more than to the exceptional one, that the training of the stock company was of so great value. Not to a meteoric genius such as Edmund Kean, but to the vast average who are never destined to rise above competency, its benefits were most substantial. No better illustration of the advantages of the system can be found than is presented to us by the second and lesser Kean. In him discipline and practice worked wonders. To use the words of George Henry Lewes: "The stamping, spluttering, ranting, tricky actor, who in his 'sallet days' excited so much mirth and so much blame, has become remarkable for the naturalness and forcible quietness with which he plays certain parts." No training, of course, could make him the equal of his father. There was, to the very end, much truth in the bitter and almost brutal statement of a contemporary critic that "to name Edmund Kean, father, with

ELLEN TERRY

Charles Kean, son, is to compare the intellectual might of Cain with the crowbar force of Jack Shepherd (*sic*).” There has always seemed to me something really pathetic in the circumstances of the younger Kean. Throughout his life he was fated to move in the gigantic shadow cast by his father, and perpetually to be obscured by that shadow. And yet he strove with unconquerable constancy; he had the deep, passionate love of an artist for his art; he lived up to ideals which himself had placed very high. And the end of it all was exquisitely disappointing to an actor of boundless ambition. Charles Kean failed to leave behind him anything like the reputation of Phelps, leave alone that of Macready. All that George Henry Lewes is able to say for him is that “he has added nothing to the elucidation of the characters, he has given no fresh light to players or public; but he has greatly improved the scenic representation, and has lavished time and money on the archæological illustration of plays.” He

EARLY DAYS

did something more than that, though perhaps he did it without knowing and without caring. The Princess's Theatre during the period of his management was a school of acting at which not a few young actors were equipped for the hard essay, the sharp conquering. Amongst these, the one destined to be most distinguished was, beyond all question, Ellen Terry.

Ellen Terry made her first appearance on any stage at the mature age of eight. Whatever preparatory training could be given to so young a child was doubtless given by her father, whom she herself describes as "a very charming elocutionist," and by her mother, who "read Shakespeare beautifully." It was, of course, at the Princess's Theatre, of the company of which Mr. Terry and her sister Kate were both members, that her *début* was made. The memorable date was Monday, the 28th of April, 1856: the play was "The Winter's Tale." Charles Kean was the Leontes, and his wife played Hermione. Mr. Terry

ELLEN TERRY

was the Officer of the Court of Judicature, while Miss Kate Terry took the part of the Servant to the Old Shepherd. But for us the all-important line of the play-bill of this performance is the following :

MAMILLIUS (his son) . . MISS ELLEN TERRY.

Miss Terry has told us her own impression of this momentous night in one of the charming papers entitled "Stray Memories" which, six or seven years ago, she contributed to "The New Review." "How my young heart," she writes, "swelled with pride—I can recall the sensation now—when I was told what I had to do. There is something, I suppose, in a woman's nature which always makes her recollect how she was dressed at any especially eventful moment of her life, and I can see myself, as though it were yesterday, in my little red and white coat—very short—*very* pink silk stockings, and a row of tight sausage curls—my mother was always very careful that they should be in perfect order



Window and Grove, photo.]



EARLY DAYS

and regularity—clustered round my head. A small go-cart, which it was my duty to drag about the stage, was also a keen source of pride, and a great trouble to me. My first dramatic failure dates from that ‘go-cart.’ I was told to run about with it on the stage, and while carrying out my instructions with more vigour than discretion, tripped over the handle, and down I came on my back. A titter ran through the house, and I felt that my career as an actress was ruined for ever. Bitter and copious were the tears I shed—but I am not sure that the incident has materially altered the course of my life.” Miss Terry’s grief was probably short-lived, for the sweets of criticism, and criticism in “The Times” itself, were at hand for her consolation. The long and very favourable review of the production, contained in the issue of that newspaper of the 1st of May, winds up an account of the principal performers with the words: “and last—ay, and least too—Miss Ellen Terry plays the boy Mamillius

ELLEN TERRY

with a vivacious precocity that proves her a worthy relative of her sister (?) Miss Kate." It should be noted that the audience included Her Majesty the Queen, Prince Albert and the Princess Royal, so that Ellen Terry began her theatrical career in the sunshine of royal patronage. Before me, as I write, is the programme from which some of these particulars are taken. It is an unwieldy, clumsy, untidy affair, forming an object lesson how type should *not* be displayed, but it is a precious souvenir nevertheless. It contains the usual manifesto by Charles Kean, in which he expresses the hope that his mounting of the piece "may be considered less an exhibition of pageantry appealing to the eye, than an illustration of history addressed to the understanding." The play-bill includes Dance's comedietta, "The Victor Vanquished," which was played before "The Winter's Tale." "The Winter's Tale" continued to run without interruption for a hundred and two nights, and, so far as I

EARLY DAYS

am able to trace, the part of the little Mamillius was played from first to last by Ellen Terry without a break.

During the whole time that Miss Terry was at the Princess's she had the special advantage of direct instruction from Mrs. Charles Kean. Miss Terry has repeatedly laid special emphasis on her gratitude to the accomplished actress who devoted so much time and labour to the guidance of her early footsteps. It was the great talent of Mrs. Kean which first fired her juvenile ambition to succeed in the art of which she was then a tiny exponent. She has also spoken with affection of her earliest dancing master, Mr. Oscar Byrn, who held the not altogether disinterested opinion that of all the essential qualifications of an actress, it was most necessary that she should learn to dance while still very young. On Wednesday, October 15th, 1856, Kean revived "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with the lavish care and elaborate detail for which he was justly famous. To Ellen

ELLEN TERRY

Terry was given the part of Puck. Her sister Kate played one of the fairies, while Miss Rose Leclercq, an admirable artist, still happily with us, played another of them. Carlotta Leclercq was the Titania of the revival, but the part was intrusted from time to time to Kate Terry. The production was an enormous success, and had what at that time was a phenomenal run of two hundred and fifty nights. Referring to the impersonations of Carlotta Leclercq and Ellen Terry, John William Cole, in his "Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean, F.S.A.," writes: "Miss Carlotta Leclercq acquitted herself with bewitching grace as Titania; the Fairy Queen. The progress of this young lady may be quoted as a remarkable evidence of the excellent training of the Princess's Theatre. In six years, from a member of the *corps de ballet*, she became one of the most accomplished and versatile comic actresses of the present day. Another presented itself in the precocious talent of

EARLY DAYS

Miss Ellen Terry, a child of eight years of age, who played the merry goblin Puck, a part that requires an old head on young shoulders, with restless, elfish animation, and an evident enjoyment of her own mischievous pranks." Miss Terry says herself that she "revelled in the impish unreason of the sprite." She has also narrated a mishap which occurred while she was playing with the Kean company at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. The following are her own words: "I was playing Puck in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and had come up through a trap at the end of the last act to give the final speech. My sister Kate was playing Titania. Up I came—but not quite up, for the man shut the trap-door too soon, and caught my toe. I screamed, Kate rushed to me and banged her foot on the stage; but the man closed the trap tighter, mistaking the signal. 'Oh! Katie! Katie!' I cried. 'Oh! Nelly! Nelly!' returned my sister. Mrs. Kean came rushing on, and made them open the

ELLEN TERRY

trap, and so I released my foot. 'Finish the play, dear,' she whispered, excitedly, 'and I'll double your salary!' There was Kate, holding me up on one side, and Mrs. Kean on the other. Well, I did finish the play; it was something like this:

'If we shadows have offended, ("Oh! Katie! Katie!")
Think but this, and all is mended, ("I hope my poor
toe will!")

That you have but slumbered here,
While these visions did appear. ("I can't! I can't!")
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream, ("Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"
and a big sob.)

Gentles, do not reprehend;
If you pardon, we will mend. ("Oh! Mrs. Kean!")

And so I got through it. My salary was doubled; and Mr. Skey, President of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, who chanced to be in a stall that very evening, came round behind the scenes and put my toe right. He remained my friend for life."

In the play-bill of the pantomime "Aladdin," produced on Boxing Day, 1856, there is no mention of Ellen Terry's name.

EARLY DAYS

The pantomime of the year following was written by J. Maddison Morton, and bore the appalling title of "Harlequin or the White Cat, or the Princess Blancheflower and her Fairy Godmothers." In this production, which ran seventy-eight nights, Ellen Terry was "The Fairy Goldenstar," who, according to the play-bill, had "no connexion with the comet." One of the scenes is described as "Allsopp's Brewery, Burton"! The pantomime was very frequently preceded by "A Midsummer Night's Dream," in which Miss Terry played Puck, as usual. The two together must have formed a pretty heavy night's work for a little girl not yet ten. On the 5th of April, 1858, "Faust and Marguerite," a very bad adaptation from the French, was revived, in which Ellen Terry played Karl (brother of Madeline), a part which her sister had previously filled. About this time, it may be noted, Kate Terry played Cordelia in the revival of "King Lear." In a comedietta by Edmund

ELLEN TERRY

Yates, entitled "If the Cap Fits," we come across Ellen Terry's name in the bill once more. Alluding to this little piece, in his "Reminiscences," Mr. Yates remarks that "it was admirably acted by, amongst others, Mr. Frank Matthews, Mr. Walter Lacy, and Miss Ellen Terry, soon after she entered the profession: she played a juvenile groom, a 'tiger,' with great spirit and vivacity." In another part of his book, referring to the incident again, the writer says: "In the present days of genuine heroine-worship, with recollections full upon us of Beatrice, Viola, Olivia, and Camma, it seems odd to read in connection with this slight comedietta that 'Miss Ellen Terry is worthy of praise for the spirit and point with which she played the part of a youthful groom.'" Miss Terry's own recollection of the play seems to be her immense pride in the top-boots which she had to wear and the agony caused her from the fact that they were too small for her. On Monday, October the 18th, 1858,

EARLY DAYS

"King John" was revived for the second time under the superintendence of Charles Kean. The part of Prince Arthur, a part in which, as we have already seen, her sister Kate gained so memorable a success on the first revival of the play in 1852, was now assigned to Ellen Terry. The great merits of her impersonation were instantly recognized. "The Daily News" declared that "the part of Arthur is played with great sweetness, clearness of enunciation, and delicate light and shade, by Miss Ellen Terry. The pride, the terror, and the love are all thoroughly childish and affecting, from the simplicity with which they are portrayed." The critic of "The Morning Post," who by a slip of the pen talks of Kate Terry, when he means, of course, Ellen Terry, becomes positively poetical in his enthusiasm, asserting that the young actress "plays Arthur with ingenuous grace and artless feeling, and extracts unaffected tenderness from its broken accents, like sweet odours from crushed flowers." "The Morn-

ELLEN TERRY

ing Herald" speaks of Miss Terry's "innocent grace and heart-touching pathos," while "The Times" contents itself with recording that "a call was raised for Mr. Walter Lacy and Miss E. Terry, the new Falconbridge and Arthur of the present cast." The staid "Athenæum" tells us that "the Arthur of Miss Ellen Terry was uncommonly excellent; and she was admirably supported by Mr. Ryder as Hubert." From these notices we may judge that there was a consensus of opinion that Ellen Terry had performed the difficult task of filling to admiration one of the best parts of her sister. Higher praise in this relation it would indeed be difficult to bestow on anyone.

In 1860 Kean's management of the Princess's came to an end. Anticipating its conclusion, Kean writes on the usual fly-leaf attached to his programmes: "It would have been impossible, on my part, to gratify my wishes in the illustration of Shakespeare, had not my previous career

EARLY DAYS

as an actor placed me in a position of comparative independence with regard to speculative disappointment. Wonderful as have been the yearly receipts, yet the vast sums expended—sums, I have every reason to believe, not to be paralleled in any theatre of the same capability throughout the world—make it advisable that I should now retire from the self-imposed responsibility of management, involving such a perilous outlay; and the more especially, as a building so restricted in size as the Princess's, renders any adequate returns utterly hopeless." By the closing of the theatre, the long engagement of Kate and Ellen Terry came to an end. But their parents had no notion of their being idle, and with a view to employing their talents, a "drawing-room entertainment" was devised, which consisted of two separate little plays in which the only performers were Kate and Ellen themselves. The experiment was first made at the Royal Colosseum, Regent's Park, and having proved quite successful, a tour was

ELLEN TERRY

begun which at first embraced Dublin, Belfast, and Plymouth, and was then continued at Deptford, Greenwich, Woolwich, Croydon, Newbury, Reading, Brighton, the Isle of Wight, and innumerable other places. There must assuredly be numbers of people still living who saw Kate and Ellen Terry in "Distant Relations" and "Home for the Holidays." How many among them, when they witnessed the performance of these children, could have predicted the triumphs which in after years they were destined to gain? Ellen Terry, we know, dreamed at a very early age of playing the characters which were associated with Mrs. Charles Kean. Indeed, she and her sister attempted something like a burlesque of the impersonations of that distinguished lady in one of the little pieces which we are now discussing. So impressive, indeed, was Kate Terry's imitation of the method of the leading lady at the Princess's that she used to bring tears to the eyes of her younger sister. The following is a frag-

EARLY DAYS

ment of the bill used at one of the towns at which the entertainment was given :

For One Night Only !

Tuesday Evening, March 13th, 1860,

MISS KATE TERRY,

and

MISS ELLEN TERRY,

The original representatives of Ariel, Cordelia, Arthur, Puck, &c. (which characters were acted by them upwards of one hundred consecutive nights, and also before her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen), at the Royal Princess's Theatre, when under the management of Mr. Charles Kean, will present their new and successful

Illustrative and Musical

DRAWING-ROOM ENTERTAINMENT,

In Two Parts entitled

“DISTANT RELATIONS”

and

“HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS,”

In which they will sustain

CHARACTERS IN FULL COSTUME.

ELLEN TERRY

The little party, which, besides the young performers themselves, included Mr. and Mrs. Terry and a pianist, went from one town to another giving the "illustrative and musical Drawing-room Entertainment" during a period extending over three years. Generally they drove from place to place in quite primitive fashion, and Miss Terry retains some lively recollections of the long days of her wanderings.



H. N. King, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY.

CHAPTER III

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

AT the conclusion of the tour with the drawing-room entertainment, Ellen Terry sought an engagement at a London theatre and was not slow to find one. Her services were promptly secured by a French lady with the imposing name of Albina di Rhona, an accomplished dancer, who in her day was voted very attractive. In recording her first appearance in London, in November, 1860, at the St. James's Theatre, "The Athenæum" says: "The management have resorted to the Terpsichorean art, always in favour at this theatre, for aid in stimulating business, which needs a degree of help at this period. Mlle. Albina di Rhona, late of St. Petersburg, is the divinity on whose name the manager has called, and,

ELLEN TERRY

as we think, not vainly. She is a dancer of uncommon merit, variety and vivacity. The piece in which she appears is performed in French and in English, and called 'Smack for Smack.' As Fanchette, the fair *artiste* astonishes poor John Trott (Mr. E. Belmore) by her agility and versatility." For some reason or other, Mlle. Albina's engagement at the St. James's came to an abrupt conclusion, and when we next hear of her she is at Drury Lane, where, according to one critic, her dancing was so brilliant as fairly to astonish the audience, who were entranced with her spirit and elegance. Her success probably induced her to go into management on her own account. The Soho Theatre, which for a long time had been given over to dust and to amateurs, was, as usual, vacant. With commendable energy Mlle. Albina di Rhona became its tenant, swept and garnished it, re-christened it the Royalty, and re-opened it somewhere about the second week in November, 1861. Ellen Terry was one of the company en-

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

gaged to support the vivacious little lady. The opening production was an adaptation by B. Barnett of Eugène Sue's romance of "Atar-Gull." "The Morning Post" describes "Atar-Gull" as a "terrific piece of business, showing how a negro in Jamaica, whose father has been hanged by a planter, thenceforth devotes himself with remorseless ferocity to the task of exterminating the aforesaid family root and branch. The story is full of horrors. A girl is bitten by a huge serpent in full view of the audience; houses are fired; men are poisoned in every possible direction, and the play abounds, if not in battle, certainly in murder and sudden death." According to "The Athenæum," "Miss Ellen Terry as Clementine acted with an interesting *naïveté*, and had a situation of some difficulty to realize. She is attacked in a summer-house, the door of which is locked, by a large serpent, and forces her way out of the window, with the coils about her neck, shrieking with terror. The young lady depicted this fear-

ELLEN TERRY

ful incident so naturally that she deservedly obtained very great applause." Speaking in "Stray Memories" of Mlle. Albina di Rhona, Miss Terry says: "When I first acted before her she danced about the stage and around me in a perfect frenzy of anger at what she was pleased to call my stupidity, and she nearly frightened the wits out of me; then something I did suddenly pleased her, and she overwhelmed me with compliments and praise. After a little time this became the order of the day, and I eventually grew fond of her, for not only was she very kind-hearted, but she won my youthful affections by the compliments she poured upon me. . . . It was to her generosity, moreover, that I owed the first piece of jewellery I ever possessed, a pretty little brooch, which, with characteristic carelessness, I promptly lost." In spite of the thrilling incident with the snake, "Atargull" was by no means a success, and soon made way for something of a livelier description. During her stay at the Royalty,

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

Miss Terry played in several unimportant pieces, one of which was entitled "The Governor's Wife." Her engagement with Mlle. Albina di Rhona, however, terminated towards the end of 1861, or early in the following year. From the Royalty Ellen Terry went to the Theatre Royal, Bristol, where her sister Kate was a leading member of Mr. J. H. Chute's remarkably powerful stock company. On the 15th of September, 1862, the extravaganza "Endymion," by William Brough, was mounted. The title-part was played by Miss Henrietta Hodson (Mrs. Labouchere); Kate Terry was Diana; Louisa Thorne made her first appearance in Bristol as Arethusa; while Ellen Terry, to use the phrase of a local critic, "made a Cupid who was his own apology for all the influence he exerted." It may be noted that Mrs. Kendal, then Miss Madge Robertson, also had a part in "Endymion," as did Mr. George Rignold and Mr. Arthur Wood.

On the 13th of October we find Ellen

ELLEN TERRY

Terry playing in another extravaganza by Brough, entitled "Perseus and Andromeda; or, the Maid and the Monster." "The Bristol Daily Post" of October 14th says: "The little part of Dictys, Perseus's henchman, was very pleasingly rendered by Miss Ellen Terry; indeed, a more delightful 'friend and follower' could hardly fall to the lot of mortal man. This young lady, her sister, and Miss Hodson, danced a cleverly arranged *pas de trois*, which closed with a Highland fling, and won an irresistible encore." With reference to her performances in burlesque, which seem, notwithstanding her diffidence, to have been very successful, Miss Terry tells us: "Of course I said I couldn't dance, I could not sing, but I was told I *had* to! and I did, in a way—it was a funny way—but it was the best thing that could happen to me, for it took the self-consciousness out of me, and after a while I thought it great fun."

On the 28th of November, 1862, Kate and Ellen Terry took a benefit at the

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

Theatre Royal previous to leaving Bristol, where they had become immensely popular. In discussing their approaching departure, "The Bristol Daily Post" says: "Our favourable opinion of the talent of these young ladies we have had opportunities of expressing on many occasions. We regard Miss Kate Terry as an actress whose mental qualifications are beyond her age. . . . Miss Ellen Terry, for so young an *artiste*, is also charming, and she possesses a natural flow of spirits which must make her a favourite wherever she appears. We lose both with regret and shall continue to watch their career with interest." On the 2nd of April, 1862, the historic playhouse at Bath was completely destroyed by fire. After considerable discussion, it was decided to rebuild it. The new theatre was opened on Wednesday, the 4th of March, 1863, with a great flourish of trumpets. The proceedings began with a rhymed dramatic prologue, in which Ellen Terry played the Spirit of the Future. This was followed

ELLEN TERRY

by a performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with a memorable cast. Ellen Terry was Titania, Miss Madge Robertson (Mrs. Kendal) the Second Singing Fairy, and Miss Henrietta Hodson Oberon. Amongst the men, we come across the names of George and William Rignold and Charles Coghlan. In addition to the performances which I have noted here, Miss Terry played a great variety of parts, extending from Shakespeare to the broadest farce, during her stay in the West of England.

On leaving Bristol, Miss Kate Terry went to the Lyceum to support Fechter. Her sister was engaged by Buckstone for the Haymarket, to which Sothern was drawing all London with his famous performance of Lord Dundreary. On the 19th of March, 1863, Ellen Terry appeared as Gertrude in "The Little Treasure." Although only fifteen years of age, she was, as we have already seen, an experienced actress. In the advertisements

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

she was described as "late of the New Theatre Royal, Bath." That she was at once successful may be judged from the criticism of her by John Oxenford in "The Times": "The version of that charming little piece, 'La Joie de la Maison,' which is well known in London as 'The Little Treasure,' has within the last few weeks been found pre-eminently useful. Revived at the Adelphi, it enabled Miss Marie Wilton [Lady Bancroft] to display talent for a wider range of impersonation than had been usually associated with her name. Performed now at the Haymarket, where it was originally produced, it presents Miss Ellen Terry in an entirely new light. But a short time since this young lady was known as the successor of her sister, Miss Kate Terry, in the representation of the most juvenile characters; and now she is matured into one of the happiest specimens of what the French call the *ingénue* that have been seen on any stage. There is nothing conventional or affected in her

ELLEN TERRY

performance of 'The Little Treasure,' but the young girl of buoyant spirits, kindly heart, impulsive emotions, and somewhat remiss education, is presented in her natural shape, free and uncontrolled as her long back-hair. Particularly excellent is her assumption of that perfect confidence which arises from complete innocence of evil. Well may poor Captain Mayden blush be stricken with terror when she makes him an offer of her hand with an audacity that the most impudent citizen of the *demi-monde* might strive to acquire. The part of Gertrude's lover, Mayden blush, was played by Sothern; Gertrude's father, Sir Charles Howard, was impersonated by Mr. Howe, who, until his death a year or two ago, was one of the most picturesque figures amongst the veterans of the stage. Miss Terry has placed it on record that she did not like Mr. Sothern. She was only one of a large number who did not take kindly to a man in whom the passion of practical joking amounted almost

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

to a disease. To Mr. Howe, on the other hand, Ellen Terry's heart went out at once, and thus began a friendship which continued to the end of the fine old actor's long life. On the Easter Monday following the production of "The Little Treasure," "Much Ado About Nothing" was put on with a view to introducing Miss Louisa Angell to metropolitan audiences in the part of Beatrice. In the judgment of the critic of "The Morning Post," that lady was by no means successful, in spite of the fact that she was supported by some of the most capable actors of the day, including Mr. Compton, Mr. Farren, Mr. Howe, and Mr. Chippendale. Ellen Terry played Hero in a way described as "graceful and winning." After Shakespeare's comedy an entertainment entitled "Buckstone at Home," written by Stirling Coyne, was given. It appears to have been a nondescript kind of piece, in which Buckstone's personality counted for everything. "It exhibited the manager," said "The

ELLEN TERRY

Athenæum," "in a state of perplexity in regard to a mythological piece which he had accepted; when a familiar friend, in the person of Mr. Farren, enters by the trap, and at once attracts whatever he wants to his hand, so that at his wish decanters, glasses, and cigars move towards him, while he delivers his opinion. Letters also are received by the manager, increasing his difficulties. Other spiritual manifestations occur. One Hamlet, in a black wig, enters, spouting like Charles Kean; another, in a flaxen wig, deports himself like Fechter. Then Sir Peter Teazle appears with Widow Green; followed by impersonations of Italian opera, and Miss Fanny Wright as Perea Nena. Mazeppa comes next, with Harlequin lamenting over the change which has taken place at Astley's; and then enter the Colleen Bawn, the Peep o' Day, Jeannie Deans, and Miss Louise Keeley as Burlesque, with other similar characters too numerous to mention. At last Britannia rises and

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

recommends the panorama which succeeds." Britannia was Ellen Terry; the panorama thus bewilderingly introduced was by William Telbin, and dealt with the Holy Land! On the 9th of April "The Belle's Stratagem" was put on. Miss Louisa Angell played Letitia Hardy, and the part of Lady Touchwood was performed by Ellen Terry. Later in the same year Miss Terry played Julia in "The Rivals." Mr. Chippendale was Sir Anthony; Mr. Wm. Farren, Captain Absolute; Mr. Howe, Faulkland; Mr. Buckstone, Bob Acres; and Miss Snowdon, the immortal Mrs. Malaprop. Referring to the part of Julia, Miss Terry says: "I think I could play it *now*, I certainly played it very ill *then*." On Boxing Day "Our American Cousin" was revived, Miss Terry playing Mary Meredith, a part which she says she acted "vilely." During the run of this piece Miss Terry left the stage for some time, during which she was married.

Let us now pass on to the year 1867.

ELLEN TERRY

On June the 8th Ellen Terry appeared at the then recently opened Theatre Royal, Holborn, in a play by Tom Taylor, entitled "The Antipodes; or, the Ups and Downs of Life." The play at the time was described as a mixture of Boucicault's "Flying Scud" and Charles Reade's "It is Never Too Late to Mend"; but the author repudiated the suggestion that he had borrowed from those works, declaring that his play was, in fact, written before either of them appeared. The heroine, Madeline, was played by Ellen Terry, and is said, by a contemporary critic, "to partake both of savage and civil life," whatever that may mean. The most conspicuous merit of "The Antipodes" seems to have been Telbin's scenery; but this, fine as it was, failed to secure for the piece anything like lasting popularity.

Miss Terry's next appearance in a part of any importance was at the Queen's Theatre. Concerning this vanished playhouse "The Athenæum" says: "The new

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

theatre, erected within the walls of what was St. Martin's Hall, in Long Acre, opened on Thursday week [October the 24th, 1867], with a new farce, and a five-act drama by Mr. Charles Reade, entitled 'The Double Marriage.' The interior of the house is singularly elegant, and the arrangements for the convenience of the audience are similar to those of the Holborn Amphitheatre, enabling each spectator to have a clear view of the stage. . . . The front of the boxes and gallery, and the proscenium and columns of the stage, are adorned with classical designs, which testify to the taste of Mr. Albert Moore; and the act-drop is an exquisite painting contained in a circular medallion, by Mr. William Telbin." "The Double Marriage" was founded by Reade on his novel, "White Lies." In spite of mounting which at that time was considered magnificent, the play was not a success. Its failure could hardly have been due to the acting, for, amongst others, the piece

ELLEN TERRY

had for its interpreters Alfred Wigan, Charles Wyndham, Lionel Brough, and Ellen Terry, who was intrusted with the part of Rose. On the 14th of November "The Double Marriage" gave way to a revival of "Still Waters Run Deep." Mr. Wigan played his original part of John Mildmay; Charles Wyndham was Captain Hawkesley; Mrs. Wigan resumed her impersonation of Mrs. Sternhold, and Ellen Terry played Mrs. Mildmay. Her acting was declared to be "easy, vivacious, and natural, and her earnestness was highly characteristic of the school in which she had been histrionically trained." "Still Waters Run Deep" was played every evening up to Christmas. On Boxing Day "Katherine and Petruchio," Garrick's stage mutilation of "The Taming of the Shrew," was revived, and on this occasion Ellen Terry and Henry Irving acted together for the first time, the former playing Katherine and the latter Petruchio. In "Stray Memories" Miss Terry alludes to

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

this interesting occasion as follows: "I fancy we neither of us played very well. From the first I noticed that Mr. Irving worked more concentratedly than all the other actors put together, and the most important lesson of my working life I learnt from him, that to do one's work well one must *work continually*, live a life of constant self-denial for that purpose, and, in short, keep one's nose upon the grindstone. It is a lesson one had better learn early in stage life, I think, for the bright, glorious, healthy career of a successful actor is but brief at the best. There is an old story told of Mr. Irving being 'struck with my talent at this time, and promising that if he ever had a theatre of his own he'd give me an engagement!' But that is all moonshine. As a matter of fact I'm sure he never thought of me at all at that time. I was just then acting very badly, and feeling ill, caring scarcely at all for my work or a theatre, or anybody belonging to a theatre." Amongst those who sup-

ELLEN TERRY

ported Ellen Terry and Henry Irving in "Katherine and Petruchio" were Mr. Lionel Brough and the late John Clayton. The performance concluded each evening with John Hollingshead's "The Birthplace of Podgers," in which Mr. Toole gave an impersonation destined to become immensely popular. "The Times" of December 30th, 1867, in the course of an exhaustive notice, says of Miss Terry's Katherine: "She takes a view of the character which departs from the usual routine, and which, perhaps, better than any other, accounts for that tamed condition of the shrew in the last act, which, if the lady is made too confirmed a virago, will appear sudden to all who share the opinion of the profound student of human nature, Captain Macheath, when he declares his predilection for women of spirit, adding that they make excellent mistresses, but 'plaguy bad wives!' The ebullitions of passion in the earlier scenes belong, according to Miss E. Terry's interpretation, rather to the

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

spoilt child than to the confirmed vixen, and as speedily as possible she makes the audience perceive that she really feels an interest in the suitor she is enjoined to marry, and that her resistance to the match is the result of waywardness, not of dislike. The speech she utters after her conversion to the now less docile sister may be taken as a model of quiet elocution, so sensibly, so feelingly, and with so unequivocal an appearance of moral conviction is it delivered." It may be of interest to note that "The Times" critic, presumably John Oxenford, goes on to state that Miss Terry is *not* "supported with the utmost efficiency by her Petruchio. Mr. H. Irving, who made his London *début* at the St. James's Theatre about a twelve-month since, is a very valuable actor, and the manager of the new Queen's has shown great judgment in securing his services. His representation of the gamester in Mr. Boucicault's 'Hunted Down'—an excellent piece, never appreciated accord-

ELLEN TERRY

ing to its deserts—and the drunkenness of despair proper to Harry Darnton in the latter portion of 'The Road to Ruin' were in their way perfect; but Petruchio is just one of those parts which apparently he cannot hit. Those who are old enough to recollect the late Mr. Charles Kemble's Petruchio will easily bring to mind the gentlemanlike rollick with which he carried off the extravagances of the shrew-tamer, showing that at bottom he was a man of high breeding, though for the nonce he found it expedient to behave like a ruffian. No impression of this kind is left by Mr. H. Irving. His early scenes are feeble, and when he has brought home his bride he suggests the notion rather of a brigand chief who has secured a female captive than of an honest gentleman engaged in a task of moral reform. Moreover, before he takes his position as a speaker of blank verse, certain defects of articulation require emendation." In acute contrast to the opinion of Oxenford is the view of the

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

critic of "The Morning Post," who delivers Miss Terry a severe lecture on her shortcomings as Katherine, in the course of which he says that she "has been most ill-advised to attempt the representation of a character for which her idiosyncrasy seems so eminently to disqualify her." The critic of "The Daily News," on the other hand, was well pleased with both Ellen Terry and Henry Irving. Of the former he says : "Katherine is sustained by Miss Ellen Terry with great success. The part is, of course, a very difficult one ; for unless it is played with sufficient spirit, the piece is deprived of all its point. On the other hand, there is always a danger lest the actress should forget that Kate of Padua was, after all, a lady ; and, moreover, a lady not devoid of noble qualities. Miss Terry appears to have hit the medium, and will be a great favourite in the character."

After the withdrawal of "Katherine and Petruchio" in January, 1868, a little two-

ELLEN TERRY

part piece, called "The Household Fairy," was put in the bill. According to "The Era," the parts were "excellently played by Mr. J. Clayton and Miss Ellen Terry, the former acting with great spirit; and the latter, as his mirthful monitor, displaying charming archness and vivacity." Soon after this Miss Terry again left the stage for a period extending over several years, during which she made a second marriage, with Mr. Charles Wardell, familiar to playgoers under his stage name of Charles Kelly. Mr. Wardell died in 1885. Both of the children of this marriage have adopted the profession of their parents. Miss Edith Wardell, professionally known as Miss Ailsa Craig, after several appearances on the amateur stage, joined the Lyceum company, where for some time she was seen but not heard. Since then she has been intrusted with such parts as Clarissant in "King Arthur," Ursula in "Much Ado About Nothing," and Donalbain in "Macbeth," all of which she has

WITH THE STOCK COMPANIES

filled with intelligence. Miss Terry's son, Mr. Edward Wardell, who is well known to playgoers as Gordon Craig, made his first appearance at the Lyceum Theatre on the 28th of September, 1889, in "The Dead Heart." Since then he has been seen in many parts, and has conclusively proved himself the possessor of a distinct gift. Not content with his achievements as an actor, Mr. Craig has essayed the graphic arts with very interesting results. His work as an illustrator possesses marked individuality, and his career as a draughtsman is being watched with attention by those who, in a work of art, demand sound technique before all else.

CHAPTER IV

UNDER THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

THE period with which the present chapter deals is one of no small interest and importance in the career of Ellen Terry. We have followed her step by step in her triumph as a child actress ; we have seen that as a very young woman she showed promise of great things and won golden opinions from all sorts and conditions of critics. It is now our business to deal with the realization of the promise and the justification of the high anticipations which were formed of her. From 1868 to 1874 she did not appear on the stage at all. It might well have been that during so long a period of inactivity she should have lost the mastery of her art. Such, however, was far from being

THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

the case. I think it is Talma, one of the greatest of French actors, who strongly insists on the necessity to the player of long spells of rest and abstinence from the practice of the craft. Perpetual indulgence in the excitement of impersonation, he tells us, dulls the sympathy and impairs the imaginative faculty of the comedian. His power of observation is weakened—he is in danger of becoming mechanical and uninspired. At all events, in the case of Ellen Terry, her long retirement from the stage proved of enormous benefit to her art and was fruitful of results which the most ardent of her old admirers could hardly be expected to foresee. Her return to the stage was made on the 28th of February, 1874, at the Queen's Theatre, which was then under the management of Charles Reade, "dear, lovable, aggravating, childlike, crafty, gentle, obstinate, and entirely delightful and interesting Charles Reade," as Miss Terry calls him. It may be interesting, in passing, to compare with

ELLEN TERRY

this Reade's own opinion of Miss Terry. "Ellen Terry," he says, "is an enigma. Her eyes are pale, her nose rather long, her mouth nothing particular. Complexion a delicate brick-dust, her hair rather like tow. Yet somehow she is *beautiful*. Her expression *kills* any pretty face you see beside her. Her figure is lean and bony, her hand masculine in size and form. Yet she is a pattern of fawn-like grace. Whether in movement or repose, grace pervades the hussy." The play in which Ellen Terry made her reappearance was entitled "The Wandering Heir," and was, of course, written by Charles Reade himself. It was inspired by the Tichborne case, which was then thrilling all England. Her part, that of Philippa Chester, was originally played by Mrs. John Wood, who still delights the playgoers of to-day, and of whose talent Reade had the highest opinion. Concerning Ellen Terry's return to the stage and her performance of the part of Philippa, "The Daily Telegraph" of

THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

the 2nd of March, 1874, says: "Playgoers need not severely tax their memory in order to revive agreeable recollections of the grace and vivacity of Miss Ellen Terry, whose professional career seemed to terminate with that of her accomplished sister. The reappearance of this young actress on Saturday night was welcomed with a cordiality fairly expressive of the value attached to these pleasant remembrances; and the position vacated by Mrs. John Wood, through the claims of other engagements, could not have been more satisfactorily filled. Miss Ellen Terry possesses exactly the qualifications demanded by such a character as Philippa, and the undiminished brightness and buoyancy of her style became at once apparent in the scene when the hoyden dwells with such delight on her love of boyish pastimes, yet shows how much she retains of girlish modesty and simplicity. Hardly less effective where the action is transferred to America, and Philippa appears in male

ELLEN TERRY

attire, was her generous devotion to the interests of James Annesley; . . . while the struggle under masculine garb to veil repeated signs of strong womanly affection was most artistically indicated. Mr. Charles Reade's drama of 'The Wandering Heir, which possesses a highly interesting story wrought out with remarkable ingenuity, has thus become endowed with an additional element of attraction."

Of Charles Reade as a stage manager Miss Terry has related some amusing stories. "One idea of his," she tells us in "Stray Memories," "was that everything should be *real* in the way of properties upon the stage; and he produced a little play of his own, called 'Rachel the Reaper' [played as an after-piece to "The Wandering Heir"], and tried to put into practice some of his pet theories. He had a short *real* wall built across the stage, but as there was no *real sun* there were no *real shadows*, and the absence of the *painted* shadows made the *real* wall appear like

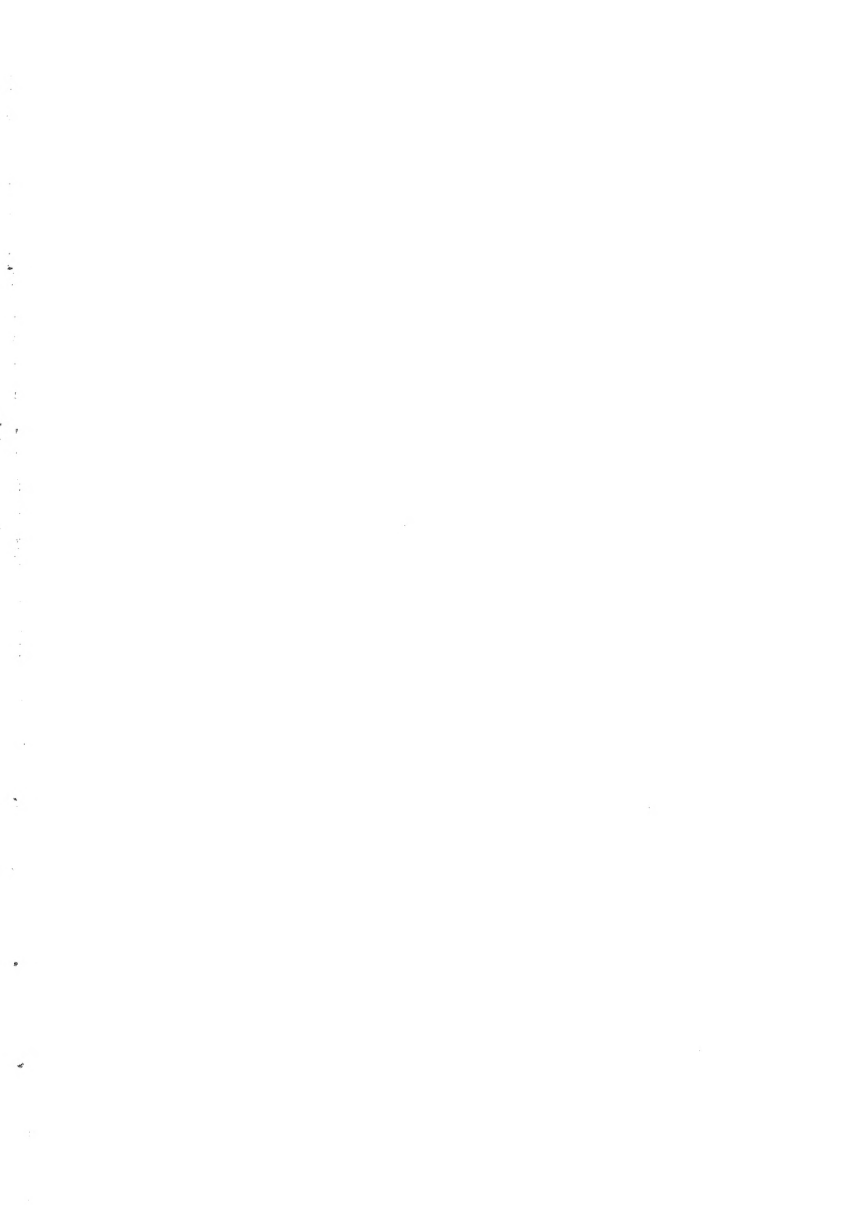
THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

anything but a wall. There was a *real* pony, who did his part beautifully; but the *real* sheep, the *real* dog, and the *real* goat really deserved to be fined a week's salary!" However badly behaved all these real creatures were, and however impracticable Reade's theory, the result greatly impressed the critic of "The Era," for, in the issue of the 15th of March, 1874, we come across the following purple patch: "We had presented to our gaze the cottage about whose porch honeysuckles climbed, and at whose threshold flowers were growing in endless variety; the old barn which transported us in imagination to the scene of many a well-wielded flail; the hay, not yet robbed of its fragrance; the straw, in whose brightness and cleanness a handsome pony seemed to revel as he feasted upon his corn; the goat munching his breakfast, and apparently scornful of the footlights; the dog, who was quite at home, and whose bark was now and again heard

ELLEN TERRY

above the voices of the *dramatis personæ*; the pigeon cote, the bee-hive, the old well, and in the distance the trees, the fields, and the growing crops—the whole being rendered still more delightful by the sweet singing of birds and by the fluttering hither and thither of the gaudy butterfly.” At the expiration of Charles Reade’s tenancy of the Queen’s, about the middle of April, 1874, the company crossed the river and gave a series of performances at Astley’s which, during the annual tour of Sanger’s circus, was used as a legitimate playhouse. To begin with, “The Wandering Heir” was played for several nights. On the 19th of April its place was taken by “It is Never Too Late to Mend,” the well-known melodrama founded by Reade on his novel of the same name. “The play,” according to “The Daily News,” “was well mounted, and the performance creditable to the actors, the Susan of Miss Ellen Terry deserving special commendation.”





THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

We now come to an engagement which proved to be momentous in Ellen Terry's career. The brilliant story of the Bancroft management of the old Prince of Wales's Theatre is familiar, not merely to those who had the good fortune to witness the productions which made the little playhouse off the Tottenham Court Road famous, but to all who have interested themselves in the modern history of the English stage. Made bold by the triumph of Robertson, the Bancrofts determined to attempt to give artistic dignity to their record by producing "The Merchant of Venice." An effort was at first made to secure the services of those admirable artists, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, for this production, but the negotiations fell through, and, greatly daring, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft finally decided to offer the part of Portia to Ellen Terry. How joyously the proposal was accepted may be judged from the following very characteristic letter :

ELLEN TERRY

“DEAR MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT,—I received the form of engagement this morning, together with the kind little letters. Accept my best thanks for your expressions of good-will towards me. I cannot tell you how pleased I am that I seem to see in you a reflection of my own feelings with regard to this engagement. My work will, I feel certain, be *joyful* work, and joyful work *should* turn out *good* work. *You* will be pleased, and *I* shall be pleased at your pleasure, and it would be hard, then, if the good folk ‘in front’ are not pleased. Believe me,

“I am *all ways*, sincerely yours,

“ELLEN TERRY.”

To secure the success of the revival the most elaborate pains were taken. The text was rearranged by Mr. Bancroft, so that the changing of scenes in sight of the audience might be avoided ; splendid scenery was painted by Mr. Gordon and Mr. Harford from drawings specially made

THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

in Venice; Mr. Meredith Ball composed new incidental music; Mr. Godwin attended to the archæological details of the mounting; and the dressing of the play was as appropriately magnificent as money and good taste could make it. The full cast, a strong one enough on paper, was as follows: Duke of Venice, Mr. Collette; Prince of Morocco, Mr. Bancroft; Prince of Arragon, Mr. Vaughan; Antonio, Mr. Archer; Bassanio, Mr. E. H. Brooke (his first appearance); Solanio, Mr. Denison; Salarino, Mr. Teesdale; Gratiano, Mr. Lin Rayne; Lorenzo, Mr. Standing; Shylock, Mr. Coghlan; Tubal, Mr. Newton; Old Gobbo, Mr. F. Glover; Launcelot Gobbo, Mr. Arthur Wood; Leonardo, Mr. Robinson; Balthazar, Mr. Franks; Grand Captain, Mr. Stewart; Crier, Mr. Noel; Gaoler, Mr. Bella; Portia, Miss Ellen Terry (her first appearance); Nerissa, Miss Carlotta Addison; Jessica, Miss Augusta Wilton. With what eager curiosity playgoers awaited Saturday, the 17th of April, 1875, the date

ELLEN TERRY

of the first performance, may well be imagined. It was no ordinary occasion. Not only was the management of a fashionable theatre completely reversing the policy to which it owed its unrivalled popularity, but in addition it was making the fascinating experiment of assigning a great Shakespearean part to an actress whose experience in the impersonation of Shakespeare's heroines amounted almost to nothing. At length the memorable evening came, and with it came emphatic failure; but it was a failure redeemed by the unqualified personal triumph of Ellen Terry. The critics were practically unanimous in proclaiming that Ellen Terry's performance of Portia proved her to be not merely a fine actress, but even a great one. "The Daily News," for example, enthusiastically declares that "this is indeed the Portia that Shakespeare drew. The bold innocence, the lively wit and quick intelligence, the grace and elegance of manner, and all the youth and freshness of this exquisite creation can

THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

rarely have been depicted in such harmonious combination. Nor is this delightful actress less successful in indicating the tenderness and depth of passion which lie under that frolicsome exterior. Miss Terry's figure, at once graceful and commanding, and her singularly sweet and expressive countenance, doubtless aid her much; but this performance is essentially artistic. Nor is there to be found in it a trace of the 'pedantry and affectation' which distinguished critics have erroneously imagined to be essential features of the character. The lady clearly does not belong to the school who imagine that the whole art of acting consists in not acting at all. She is, on the contrary, very inventive in what the players call 'business'—her emphasis is carefully studied, and her action and movements all receive that subtle infusion of colour which raises them into the region of art, and always prevents them from becoming commonplace. But, instead of being less natural on that account, sincerity and

ELLEN TERRY

truth are stamped upon her entire performance." "The Daily Telegraph" is not less enthusiastic, stating that "Miss Terry, in her beautiful robes, looked as if she had stepped out of a canvas by Mr. Leighton. She took us back to old Venice quite as much as Mr. Godwin's 'archæological research' and Mr. Gordon's charming pictures. Treasured among the memories of this theatre, so celebrated for its examples of refined comedy, will be the love scene between Bassanio and Portia, and the expression in it of a maiden's wooing. Linger long in the recollection will be the comedy scenes of this play in which Miss Terry took part. This is indeed very perfect acting, in the style of art which cannot be taught. It is not, perhaps, the Portia of the stage, but it is the very poetry of acting." The opinion of these journals was endorsed by their contemporaries, and the foundation of Ellen Terry's fame was firmly laid. She has had many triumphs in great Shake-

THE BANCROFT MANAGEMENT

spearean characters since, but probably none have been sweeter to her than this, the triumph of her essay. She herself says: "How I loved playing Portia—I have tried five or six different ways of treating her. Unfortunately, the way I think the *best* way does not find response with my audiences." It is difficult to believe that Miss Terry's favourite way of playing Portia should be anything but delightful, but that it could be more charming than the way in which she usually does play the part is hardly to be credited.

CHAPTER V

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

IN spite of the success of the new Port
"The Merchant of Venice" was on
played at the Prince of Wales's Thea
thirty-six times. With a frankness wort
of all praise the Bancrofts advertised th
"the performance of 'The Merchant
Venice' having failed to attract lar
audiences, the play would be withdraw
Its place was taken by a revival of L
Lytton's comedy, "Money," in which M
Bancroft played Lady Franklin, M
George Honey was Mr. Graves, and
rôle of the hero, Alfred Evelyn, was assign
to Mr. Charles Coghlan. The part
Clara Douglas afforded Ellen Terry
opportunity of another conspicuous succ
The first performance took place on

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

29th of May, 1875, and two days later the critic of "The Daily Telegraph" wrote: "But if the art of Mrs. Bancroft contains the rare charm of perfect and disciplined expression, that of Miss Ellen Terry is conspicuous for its sympathy and nature. Except Aimée Desclée, we can recall no actress in modern times who has possessed the gift of so absorbing herself in the creation that the actress is lost entirely, or who so thoroughly compels her audience to follow the workings and anxiety of her mind. There is a certain thrill caused by the deep-toned voice, and a throb in the modulation of it, which are of the greatest gain. The whole staginess of the picture disappears, the artificiality vanishes when the new Clara Douglas chides her 'noble Evelyn.' We think of nothing but Clara Douglas; she opens her heart to us and we understand her nature. The actress paints for us the perfection of gentleness and maiden modesty. A highly nervous and sensitive temperament is suggested by

ELLEN TERRY

the wringing of the hands and the halting concealment of the face. The voice is eloquent with persuasion, and the whole nature of the woman is steeped in tenderness. 'And now that there is nothing unkind between us—not even regret—and surely not revenge, my cousin, you will rise to your nobler self—and so farewell.' These are the words which ring in the ears, and so charm the audience with their creation. The poetry of deeply felt, but unexaggerated grief, is here given in all its truth and intensity. But, as we have hinted before, the extreme naturalness of such performance as this has the effect of making prominent many of the artificial positions of the comedy. It is not acting, it is nature itself. But then, unfortunately, an inevitable contrast must be caused. For instance, the phraseology put into his mouth prevents a very natural Alfred Evelyn; and the character, remarkable for its stageness, becomes more so by the side of such Clara—perhaps the most interesting and

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

sympathetic that could be quoted." "The Standard" was not a whit less enthusiastic. "Nothing," it is declared, "will distinguish this revival so favourably as the exquisitely graceful, tender, and charming performance of Clara Douglas by Miss Ellen Terry. Not only are voice and gesture alike winning and sympathetic, but in a hundred little details which would escape the notice of any but an actress of the very highest capacity does Miss Terry prove her power. . . . Miss Terry has the rare gift of identifying herself with the personage she presents, and neither on our own stage nor on the French do we remember any exemplification of womanly self-sacrifice which surpasses Clara Douglas at the Prince of Wales's." On the 19th of June a special *matinée* was given, when Theyre Smith's little play, "A Happy Pair," and W. S. Gilbert's "Sweethearts" were performed. In the former piece Miss Terry played Mrs. Honeyton, the only other part in it, that of Mr. Honeyton, being performed

ELLEN TERRY

by Mr. Bancroft. The revival of "Money" proved a great success, and its run was resumed after the summer vacation of 1875.

On Saturday, the 7th of August of that year, Miss Terry gave new evidence of her versatility by achieving an emphatic success in the part of Pauline in "The Lady of Lyons," which was played on this occasion at the Princess's Theatre for one night only. The fascination of this *rôle* for an actress is not difficult to understand. The day has gone by when the plays of Lord Lytton were seriously considered as literature: they are merely fustian, but they are nevertheless fustian of a clever kind, and, however low we may rate their author as an artist, he undoubtedly possessed in a remarkable degree the gift of creating parts in which the well-graced actor can display his qualities to the utmost effect. Lord Lytton was essentially an actor's author; he distributed "fat" with a lavish hand, he was prodigal of "situations," and profuse in giddy rhetoric, with the result that his

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

dramas are constantly performed even in these sophisticated days of the problem play, the musical comedy, and "Charley's Aunt." I venture to quote at some length Mr. Joseph Knight's account of Ellen Terry's Pauline, because it seems to me a singularly well-balanced criticism of an impersonation which she gave at a very interesting moment in her theatrical career. That Mr. Knight has himself held it worth preservation is proved by the fact that he reprinted it three or four years ago in his volume entitled "Theatrical Notes":

"The performance at the Princess's by Miss Ellen Terry of the character of Pauline, in 'The Lady of Lyons,'" says Mr. Knight, "gives to an entertainment intended for one night only, and appealing to a very limited section of the public, an interest a similar occasion has seldom claimed. Its effect is to set the seal upon a growing reputation, and to make evident the fact that an actress of a high, if not the

ELLEN TERRY

highest, order has arisen in our midst. One of the pleasantest, inasmuch as it is one of the rarest, tasks the critic is called upon to discharge is that of heralding to the world the advent of genius. So vast a space separates, ordinarily, aspiration from accomplishment, the critic's duty becomes merged in that of the censor, and the public comes to regard him as one whose sole function is to point out inequalities of workmanship and failure of effort. In the case of things dramatic and histrionic, it is rarely indeed the critic can do more than suggest some promise of talent behind crude performance—some glimpse of meaning or intention in a commonplace rendering. There is, accordingly, a pleasure of no ordinary kind in announcing a fact Miss Terry's recent performances have fully established, viz., that an actress has developed in whom there is that perception of analogies, that insight into mysteries, and that power of interpretation, on which the world has bestowed the name of genius.

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

Circumstances took Miss Terry from the stage at a time when men dimly perceived in her the promise which has since been realized. It is probable that some delay in that maturity of style indispensable to perfection in histrionic art has resulted from this break in her career. The interval can scarcely have been mispent, however, since Miss Terry reappeared on the stage with ripened powers and with improved method. . . . Physical advantages are, of course, an all-important portion of the stock-in-trade of an actress. The long, tender lines of a singularly graceful figure add wonderful picturesqueness to the illustrations Miss Terry affords. Her presentation of Pauline comprised a series of pictures each more graceful than the preceding, and all too good for the lackadaisical play in which she appeared. They would have been perfectly in place as illustrations to some Border ballad or legend of the 'Round Table.' More important, however, than this gift of pic-

ELLEN TERRY

turesqueness, magical as is its effect in illustrating art, is the power of getting inside a character and revealing it to the public. This, in the case of Portia, Miss Terry does, showing us one of the loveliest of Shakespearean creations in colours in which few among students even had dressed it, flooding it, so to speak, with a light of illumination. As interpretation her Pauline is less successful. *Pride*, which in the character of Pauline divides the empire with *Love*, in the interpretation makes scarcely a fight. Conceding, however, that the conception is wrong to this extent, the impersonation is singularly fine. A score of natural and artistic touches reveal the tenderness and longing of the woman's heart, while in the fourth act, in which Pauline seeks to force herself from the environing arms of her parents and join her departing lover, whose words of farewell sting her to madness, is one of those pieces of electrical acting that produce upon the mind an effect of which art in other develop-

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

ments seems scarcely capable. It is too early yet to gauge fully the talent which has revealed itself. It seems probable that Miss Terry's powers will be restrained to depicting the grace, tenderness, and passion of love. In the short scene in the third act, in which Pauline chides her lover for treachery, the actress scarcely rises to the requisite indignation. Limiting, however, what is to be hoped from her within the bounds indicated, what chance is there not afforded? Juliet in the stronger scenes would be, we should fancy, outside the physical resources of the artist. Beatrice, Rosalind, Viola, Imogen, Miranda, and a score other characters of the most delicate and fragrant beauty, are, however, all within what appears to be her range. In the present state of public feeling respecting the Shakespearean drama, it will be strange indeed if some manager does not take the opportunity of mounting some of those plays for which her talent is so eminently adapted. . . . There will be a regrettable

ELLEN TERRY

waste if talent so specially suited to the Shakespearean drama is confined to Lord Lytton's facile sentiment and sparkling rhetoric." It seems to me that Mr. Knight's criticism is characterized by rare insight: the extent to which his prophecy has been fulfilled is certainly remarkable. All that the critic hoped Miss Terry would do, and believed she could do if the opportunity were given her, she has done in fashion most notably brilliant. That she still retains some affection for the tinsel glories of Pauline we know from the fact that she has played the part within the last few months at the Grand Theatre, Fulham. Needless to say, the incredible vitality of "The Lady of Lyons" was demonstrated once more, and Lord Lytton's flashy imitation of poetry met with its usual tribute of applause.

But it is time we returned to the Prince of Wales's Theatre. On the 6th of November, 1875, "Masks and Faces," which had undergone a process of revision

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

by its authors, Charles Reade and Tom Taylor, was revived in a most elaborate style. The cast was a fairly strong one, including as it did Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, Mr. Coghlan, and Mr. Arthur Wood. Ellen Terry played the part of Mabel Vane, and was so fortunate as to secure almost unqualified praise from her old and capricious friend Reade, who condescended also to approve Mrs. Bancroft's new and remarkable impersonation of Peg Woffington, as well as the Triplet of Mr. Bancroft. According to "The Athenæum," "the duty of Miss Terry as Mabel Vane scarcely extends beyond wearing tastefully the artistic dresses provided. She goes farther, however, and, by an admirable display of tenderness and trust, assigns the part an importance it has not previously received. This innovation was highly palatable to the audience, which greeted the impersonation with such cheers as the part had not previously elicited." The revival of "Masks and Faces" was succeeded by "Wrinkles,"

ELLEN TERRY

by H. J. Byron, which proved to be one of the few disasters of the Bancroft management of the old Prince of Wales's Theatre. Although the author had special instructions to provide Miss Terry with a first-class part, he failed to do so, and Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft did not feel justified in asking her to play a minor *rôle* in what turned out to be an ill-fated production. On the 6th of May, 1876, Robertson's comedy "Ours," was revived, when Mrs. Bancroft of course, re-assumed her original character of Mary Netley. Ellen Terry filled the part of Blanche Haye, which was played by Miss Louisa Moore when the piece was first produced, and on its first revival by Miss Fanny Josephs. To an actress who had triumphed as Portia, the impersonation of such a part as that of Blanche Haye was a small matter, and could add nothing to her reputation. "Ours" was the last production at the Prince of Wales's in which Miss Terry took part. Her connection with the little playhouse

CLARA DOUGLAS AND PAULINE

off the Tottenham Court Road is not the least important of the many associations which have contributed to make that theatre historic.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE COURT THEATRE

ILLNESS prevented Ellen Terry from playing Blanche Haye to the end of the run of "Ours." When next she appeared on the stage it was as a member of the company of the Court Theatre, at that time under the management of Mr. John Hare. Early in November, 1876, an "original comedy" by Charles Coghlan, entitled "Brothers," was produced, the chief interpreters being Mr. Hare, Mr. Kelly, Mr. H. B. Conway, and Miss Terry. In spite of the excellent acting of these artists, the piece failed to attract. Writing in "The Academy" of Miss Terry's performance in this play, Mr. Frederick Wedmore says: "Miss Ellen Terry, in the character of Kate, the heroine, is intrusted with no strong dra-

AT THE COURT THEATRE

matic scenes. Emotions are called very little into play: the whole thing is within the range of comedy, when it does not fall into the range of farce. A scene in the first act, where the less worthy of Kate's lovers wants to lock her up in his studio, promises at first to be rousing, and one is inclined to find fault with Miss Terry for not playing it with more of fire, until it is made plain that even in the intention of the author strong feeling had little part in it. There and afterwards Miss Terry abounds in gestures of varied and natural grace, and by her exquisitely pointed and considered delivery she brings into high relief all that is good in the dialogue. And this is fortunate for Mr. Coghlan, who is best in his talk." On the withdrawal of "Brothers" at the beginning of December, Mr. Hare determined to woo fortune with an established favourite, and chose for revival "New Men and Old Acres," by Tom Taylor and A. W. Dubourg. The piece, although it seems somewhat old-fashioned

ELLEN TERRY

at the present day, and has, indeed, already lost much of its point, is undoubtedly a good one of its kind, and affords admirable opportunities for able acting. It would have been difficult to improve upon the interpretation which "New Men and Old Acres" received at the Court, where every part was artistically performed. "Without going to the best Parisian theatres," writes Mr. Joseph Knight, "it is not easy to rival the performance now given, and there even the majority of the impersonations would call for notice. The result is highly gratifying to the public, unused to spectacles such as are now presented to it, and is most honourable to the management. Our thankfulness, however, and our congratulations, great as they are, have a limit. When we have actors who can present a comedy of past times in the manner in which this comedy of to-day is interpreted by those Mr. Hare has assembled, acting will again be a living art. Faithfully to reproduce the manners around him is, after all, but a small

AT THE COURT THEATRE

portion of a comedian's duty. When, however, there is so much occasion for censure, it would be churlish to refuse praise honestly earned. We may congratulate, accordingly, Mr. Hare and his company upon a performance which lifts off a portion of the reproach under which we have lain, and that is the more noteworthy inasmuch as, of the dozen actors concerned in the performance, there is no one that does not deserve praise." As Lilian Vavasour, Ellen Terry had a part which, if it did not tax her gifts to the utmost, was especially appropriate to them, and it need not be said that she made the most of it. Many times as the *rôle* has been played, no actress has realized it more perfectly than Ellen Terry. Concerning this revival, she says: "'New Men and Old Acres' was put up as a stop-gap to fill up the time whilst rehearsing another play. It was not a new play, but the public just *loved it*, and it had a long run."

On the 1st of March, 1877, a gigantic performance was given at Drury Lane

ELLEN TERRY

Theatre for the benefit of Henry Compton, a very distinguished actor, who, owing to long illness, was forced to give up all hope of ever returning to the stage, of which he had been so conspicuous an ornament. The chief feature of the entertainment was the representation of part of Lord Lytton's comedy, "Money," with an overwhelming cast, which was as follows: Lord Glossmore, Mr. Henry Neville; Sir John Vesey, Mr. Hare; Sir Frederick Blount, Mr. Kendal; Graves (his original character), Mr. B. Webster; Stout, Mr. David James; Alfred Evelyn, Mr. Edward Compton (his first appearance in London); Sharp, Mr. William Farren; Servant, Mr. Bancroft; Lady Franklin, Mrs. Bancroft; Georgina Vesey, Miss Ellen Terry; Clara Douglas, Mrs. Kendal. This performance is remarkable for two things. In the first place it was the occasion of Benjamin Webster's last appearance on the stage, and in the second, we find the three female parts sustained by the three women who are

AT THE COURT THEATRE

generally considered the three greatest living English actresses.

The next important production at the Court Theatre in which Miss Terry was engaged was a posthumous comedy of modern life, by Lord Lytton, entitled "The House of Darnley." The author left it incomplete, but at the request of his son, the late Earl of Lytton, a fifth act was added by Mr. Charles Coghlan. The play, produced in October, 1877, was neither a popular nor an artistic success. It was deemed on all hands far inferior to the older works of its author. Mr. Moy Thomas sums up his impression of it, and of Miss Terry's share in it, in the following words: "For a moment the dignified bearing of Mr. Kelly, and the refined anger, the tender, regretful reproaches, and the earnest pleading of Miss Ellen Terry touch a chord of sympathy; but the reaction is for this reason only the greater, for the audience cannot but feel that, as the sorrows of the twain are due only to

ELLEN TERRY

the arbitrary contrivances of the dramatist, so is the delay in bringing about an explanation manifestly ascribable to no other cause. The play, admirably acted as it is, attracts audiences ; and it may be said that it yields a certain amount of pleasure ; but it can have no influence upon the progress of dramatic art, unless it be to foster a belief that dramatic invention is exhausted, and that a lifetime's study of the stage may avail little, even when combined with dramatic genius of a high order." In January, 1878, the place of "The House of Darnley" was taken by Tom Taylor's comedy, "Victims," a crude and inartistic piece, in which the so-called æsthetic movement was satirized, perhaps for the first time. Her part in this play afforded Miss Terry very little scope for her talent, and need not detain us further.

On the 30th of March "Olivia," the well-known play founded by the late W. G. Wills on "The Vicar of Wakefield," was produced at the Court Theatre, and

AT THE COURT THEATRE

the occasion is certainly one of the most important in Ellen Terry's career as an actress. W. G. Wills wrote many plays and made many adaptations, but he failed to prove himself either a great poet or a great dramatist. In "Olivia," however, he gave us of his best, and his best was undoubtedly very good. If "Olivia" cannot be considered a fine play, it is certainly a delightful one, touched, as it is, here and there with genuine poetic feeling. The writing of parts for particular players is not a business of which anybody who really cares for plays of serious interest and fine literary quality can approve, but if a part was to be specially written for Ellen Terry at all, it is hardly conceivable that one more suited to her gifts than Olivia should have been produced. Olivia is by no means the most important of Ellen Terry's impersonations, but I question whether it is not the most charming of them. The Olivia drawn by Wills is more than realized. For once it is fair, in speaking of an interpretation, to

ELLEN TERRY

employ the much-abused word "creation." It is impossible to think of Olivia without thinking of Ellen Terry. At the mere mention of the name the exquisitely pathetic creature whom she presented to us comes unbidden into the mind. The critics were unanimous in praise of the play and the player: both dramatist and actress feasted to the full on the sweets of applause, and Mr. Vezin, who acted the Vicar admirably, and Mr. Hare, who, with the aid of Mr. Marcus Stone, R.A., mounted the piece with his wonted taste and skill, shared in the feast. Of the reception of the play on its first production Mr. Freeman Wills, in his interesting study of his brother's life, gives the following account: "It was in April, 1878," he writes, "that 'Olivia' was produced at the Court Theatre, under the perfect management of Mr. Hare, with Miss Ellen Terry in the title rôle. Who can forget the scenes and impressions of that first night? The vicarage orchard in apple harvest; the vicarage

AT THE COURT THEATRE

parlour with its ancient spinet and cuckoo clock; the delightful children, and the vicar and his wife, just stepped out of the olden time, quaint and beautiful; the simplest of country life; the touching sadness of troubles at home besetting this peaceful household. Mr. Hare could not sleep for anxiety; the cares of management were so great that he felt it impossible to undertake Dr. Primrose. The character was at first allotted to Mr. Kelly, but on his throwing it up, Hermann Vezin was happily asked to sustain the character of the vicar. Even in his dreams the play haunted the manager. He said: 'If this is a failure, I know nothing of management, I will retire from the stage.' The author did not read the play to the company, as had been the custom, and he seldom came to rehearsal. He was unpractical, and had difficulty when he did attend in conveying his ideas, for he was too conscious of himself to be able to act; but nevertheless his ideas were generally essentially right.

ELLEN TERRY

Sometimes, however, he would propose something utterly impossible. For instance, at an early rehearsal he suggested that when Olivia got off her couch, her dress should catch on a nail. He thought it would make a pretty picture. But what the author had in a high degree was the power of fitting an actress with a part, and never did he succeed so well as in writing Olivia for Miss Terry. The charm which the play exercised upon society, high and low, we can all remember. It touched fashions. It left its record in 'The Queen,' and all the modes were influenced by the sweet parson's daughter. Olivia's cap was everywhere, and many a young face looked charming under its sweet simplicity. The actress was made for the part, and the inexpressible charm she gave it will never be forgot. The playgoers of to-day, as of twenty years ago, know how it has affected them, for time has in no degree lessened the charm which Miss Terry gave to the part of the vicar's daughter. Olivia is still

AT THE COURT THEATRE

the same as we knew her long ago. 'I wish I were younger for her sake,' she says in a letter to the author. But time has stood still for this incomparable actress. How the part affects herself is the other side which the playgoer might be curious to learn. 'Does Punch feel?' was a question on which Mr. Irving once wrote in a periodical—actors may be mechanical in their art, but Miss Terry is not—she feels intensely, and in her voice the tears are real, for it is her emotional nature that makes her great." Ellen Terry's triumph in the part of Olivia was destined to have profound consequences, not only on her own theatrical life, but upon the history of the English stage. It was the immediate cause of her engagement by Henry Irving for the Lyceum Theatre.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST SEASON AT THE LYCEUM

IN engaging Ellen Terry as his leading lady—to use a vile but time-honoured and convenient expression—Henry Irving at the very outset of his career as a manager gave proof of something akin to genius. His choice was much more than a happy one: it was positively ideal. In a little yellow pamphlet which he published over fifteen years ago, Mr. William Archer pointed out, with a very great show of justice, that Irving's phenomenal success was due in no small degree to his intensity. The playgoer of the time was in the mood for the intense, and was willing to overlook and forgive a great deal if he got that for which he craved. He was little inclined



Window and Grove, photo.]

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

to cavil over mere details of the technics of the art of acting so long as he had his heart's desire. The most precious of all Irving's qualifications as an actor is beyond question the possession of "magnetic personality," a quality which it is almost impossible to resist and entirely impossible to define, one which accounts more satisfactorily for the power of the great orator and preacher than the gift of argument or the command of language. To find an actress whose personality should harmonize with his own was to Irving, when he commenced his eventful tenancy of the Lyceum Theatre, a matter of supreme moment. In spite of his rare gifts and his indomitable perseverance, his career would inevitably have been less magnificent if he had chosen ill. But with unerring instinct he went to the one actress of the day who, as it were, was the complement of himself, whose artistic temperament was best suited to his own. Nothing could have been more faultlessly felicitous than his selection of

ELLEN TERRY

Miss Terry as his chief companion in the splendidly ambitious enterprise upon which he was about to embark. When he acquired her services, he reduced the possibilities of failure to a minimum; for, in addition to great experience and high intelligence, she possessed the very quality of intensity which was characteristic of Irving himself. Her enthusiasm for her art was as great as his: her passion for experiment in that art not a whit less ardent than his own. Moreover, she shared with him his almost exaggerated solicitude for the dignity of the actor's calling. Acting to her was a very serious matter, and the actor a very serious and important artist.

And, again, the type of drama in which Irving yearned to succeed was precisely that which Ellen Terry found most to her taste. Like him, she cared nothing for plays impregnated with the sordid actualities of the present time: her heart was with the people of the old heroic days,

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

“ Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o’ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife.”

The sumptuous colour of Verona in the Middle Ages and not the Raquin’s mean apartment in the Passage du Pont Neuf, the picturesque beauty of London when Henry VIII. was king and not the Helmer’s flat in modern Christiania, were the places which appealed to her imagination. She has told us that she would not care to play Ibsen, and has gone so far as to dismiss as “silly ladies” those wonderful female types which, in the eyes of not a few of us, entitle their creator to the first place amongst the dramatists of the century. Miss Terry has even ventured the opinion that the women of the Ibsen drama are astonishingly easy to play, that they are, so to speak, all drawn in “straight lines.” This is undoubtedly a curious and interesting conclusion at which to arrive, and, coming from so great an actress as Ellen Terry, it is entitled to consideration, even though we find our-

ELLEN TERRY °

selves in profound disagreement with it. In her passionate affection for the poetic and romantic drama, as opposed to the psychological drama of modern life, Irving, it goes without saying, shared to the full. For long years, with slow but unhesitating tread, he climbed the lower slopes of his art until, owing to the marvellous truthfulness of detail and vigour of general effect of his impersonation of Digby Grant in "Two Roses," he emerged from comparative obscurity to something approaching fame. But still he was restless and dissatisfied. He had set his ideal much higher than Digby Grant, and the attainment of that ideal seemed very far off. But in point of fact his opportunity was at hand. In 1871, in "The Bells," he gave one of the most amazing melodramatic impersonations of the age, which at once became literally the talk of the town. Then, under the Bateman management at the Lyceum, in rapid succession came his triumph as Charles I., as Eugene Aram, as Richelieu, while some

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

time after he obtained his crowning success as Hamlet. Irving's ambition was to a great extent realized. The long series of skirmishes was over: thenceforward, as actor and manager, his career, as we all know, has been a parade, of which Ellen Terry has deservedly shared the honours with him. The story of that parade we will now proceed briefly to tell.

In the autumn of 1878 Irving became manager of the Lyceum Theatre, in succession to Mrs. Bateman, who, when she transferred the reins of management to him, frankly admitted that to his power of attraction as an artist the recent "prosperity of the theatre" had been "entirely attributable." His first business was, obviously, to secure the services of a leading lady, and, as we know, his choice at once fell upon Ellen Terry. In reference to this engagement, "The Theatre" of the 1st of October, 1878, says: "The one step with regard to the coming enterprise which is known to have been taken will be held by

ELLEN TERRY

those most capable of forming an opinion to give the happiest augury of the method and spirit in which the work is to be carried out. The engagement of Miss Ellen Terry, who fairly heads the list of our emotional actresses, besides having given ample evidence of her command of elocutionary and other more technical resources, may legitimately be held to mean a great deal. It shows that no endeavour is to be spared towards forming at the Lyceum a company which shall be the strongest attainable ; it shows that the highest merit—for such we conceive Miss Terry's to be—is appreciated in the most practical manner ; and it shows that what is vulgarly known as a 'combination of talent' is not for the future to be reserved only for the representation of drawing-room comedy and for the scratch performance of classical scraps at a morning benefit. Any work upon which artists of the calibre of Mr. Irving and Miss Terry are likely to simultaneously engage is morally sure to be

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

worthy of the utmost attention, and the suggested association is for many a lover of the theatre the realization of a day-dream which seems almost too good to be true. If in other particulars the new Lyceum company can be strengthened after this fashion, we are assuredly on the high road to the foundation of a school of dramatic art which will afford us both pleasure and pride. For our own part, we cannot avoid, and we do not seek to avoid, discovering in the prospect which seems opened out to us by this venture a striking verification of the belief which we expressed in the first number of this magazine, that our stage, in spite of all misfortune and mistake, is 'steadily moving onward and upward.' We need not profess to doubt that, be the practical outcome of the experiment what it may, the future career of the principal actors will belie their past, or that the fair promise given by artistic efforts of days gone by will be falsified in the achievement of days to come."

ELLEN TERRY

Henry Irving and Ellen Terry made their first appearance as Hamlet and Ophelia at the Lyceum Theatre on the 30th of December, 1878, so that nearly eleven years had elapsed since they last played together at the Queen's Theatre in "Katherine and Petruchio." It was at the Lincoln's Inn Fields playhouse, the site of which was not far away from the Queen's Theatre, that, in 1662, Mrs. Saunderson played Ophelia to the Hamlet of Betterton. Eleven years later, at the Dorset Garden Theatre, Mrs. Betterton played Ophelia to her husband's Hamlet, and from her time to the present day an illustrious succession of actresses have interpreted this supremely pathetic character. It was a favourite part with Mrs. Mountford and was not forgotten by her even when madness overtook her. "One day, in a lucid interval," according to Genest, "she asked what play was to be performed that evening, and was told it was to be 'Hamlet.' Whilst she was on the stage

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

she had acted Ophelia with great applause ; the recollection struck her, and with all that cunning which is so frequently allied to insanity, she found means to elude the care of her attendants, and got to the theatre, where, concealing herself till the scene where Ophelia was to make her appearance in her mad state, she pushed upon the stage before the person who played the character that night, and exhibited a far more perfect representation of madness than the utmost exertions of theatrical art could do—she was, in truth, *Ophelia herself*, to the amazement of the performers as well as of the audience—nature having made this last effort, her vital powers failed her and she died soon after.” On the occasion of Garrick’s first appearance as Hamlet in England, in 1742, Mrs. Pritchard was his Ophelia. To come nearer to our own day, Helen Faucit (Lady Martin), whose death we have recently deplored, played the part with Macready for the first time when the great actor was

ELLEN TERRY

performing in Paris and delighting Théophile Gautier with his power. In "Shakespeare's Female Characters" Lady Martin tells us : " I learned afterwards that among the audience, when I first played Ophelia, were many of the finest minds in Paris ; and these found 'most pretty things' to say of the Ophelia to which I had introduced them. Many came after the play to my dressing-room, in the French fashion, to say them, I suppose ; but, having had this ordeal to go through before, after Desdemona, the character in which I first appeared in Paris, my English shyness took me out of the theatre as soon as I had finished, and before the play ended. All this was, of course, pleasant. But what really gratified me most was to learn that Mr. Macready, sternest of critics, watched me on each night in the scenes of the fourth act ; and, among the many kind things he said, I cannot forget his telling me that I had thrown a new light on the part, and that he had never

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

seen the mad scenes even approached before."

It goes without saying that the Ophelia of Ellen Terry was distinguished by the wonderful charm which is characteristic of all she does. She was careful to make it clear that Ophelia was a girl rather than a woman, a girl on the verge of maturity, it is true, but nevertheless a girl alike in mind and body. From what Laertes says, Ophelia could only have reached her early teens, and more than that, her comparative silence and docility are those of a child rather than of an adult. The complete innocence of the most ill-fated of all Shakespeare's heroines was realized by Miss Terry with marvellous art. Intelligence she always gives us; here she gave us actual inspiration. And the whole performance was marked by an infinite pathos. One felt a boundless compassion for her when she plaintively uttered the lines :

" And I of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows."

ELLEN TERRY

The Ophelia of Ellen Terry was so entirely lovable, so bewitchingly tender and gentle, that it was small wonder that Hamlet declared :

“ I loved Ophelia ; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.”

In the scenes which are generally and, as it seems to me, unfortunately described as the mad scenes, she proved herself mistress of the technical resources of her craft. Her Ophelia was not a mad Ophelia, but an insane one. She showed us, with a realism which was happily kept in check by fine taste, the terrible spectacle of a normal girl become hopelessly imbecile as the result of overwhelming mental agony. Hers was an insanity without wrath or rage, without exaltation or paroxysms. It found its vent in babbling :

“ Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.”

Miss Terry depicted a creature whose mind is so shattered as to be beyond hope or

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

help. Her fine artistic sense prevented the picture from being shocking or revolting. M. Jules Clartie, the director of the Théâtre Française, expressed himself enchanted with Ellen Terry's Ophelia, and said that she looked like the apparition of a Pre-Raphaelite saint or a Madonna by Giovanni Bellini.

The new Ophelia was on all hands proclaimed a brilliant success, and the revival of "Hamlet" ran for a hundred and eight nights to crowded houses. Somewhere about this time a very interesting article appeared in "The Saturday Review," in which the qualities of Sarah Bernhardt and Ellen Terry were compared. "The latter," declares the anonymous author of the criticism in question, "is to the English stage what the other is to the French. The two actresses are superficially about as unlike as may be, and yet their method is radically the same; or, in other words, they are both true actresses. It must, of course, be admitted that Miss Terry has

ELLEN TERRY

not yet had such opportunities of displaying her powers as have fallen to the lot of Mlle. Bernhardt; nor has she yet attained the perfection of art which Mlle. Bernhardt can, when she chooses to take the trouble, display; but to her, as to Mlle. Bernhardt, one may safely apply the much-misused term of genius. Like Mlle. Bernhardt, Miss Ellen Terry has the semblance of spontaneousness; and, like her, she is always identified with every thought and habit of every character that she represents. There is a further likeness between the two in that both are excellent both in tragedy and comedy. It is, however, as Ophelia that Miss Terry has won for herself a place in the first rank of actresses."

The second of the Lyceum productions in which Ellen Terry took part was "The Lady of Lyons," which was played for the first time under Mr. Irving's management on the 17th of April, 1879. Mr. Joseph Knight's excellent criticism of Miss Terry's first appearance in the part of Pauline has

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

already been quoted in these pages. We have seen how interesting an impersonation of the distressful daughter of the house of Deschappelles she gave at the Princess's Theatre, in the days when her position as a great actress had still to be won. Her performances of Pauline at the Lyceum certainly did little to increase the reputation which she had most legitimately gained as Olivia and Ophelia. But she was by no means the only member of the Lyceum company who failed to win new laurels in the revival of Lord Lytton's play. The most friendly critics of Sir Henry Irving maintain a discreet silence as to his Claude Melnotte : it is all but universally admitted that the part is one to which the gifts and personality of the actor are utterly unsuited. Whatever else he can do, Sir Henry Irving cannot spout love in high-flown and garish rhetoric through several acts to a tearful and hysterical lady, no matter how charming she may be. Dozens of inferior actors can do it, and do it very well, but to

ELLEN TERRY

the great exponent of Richard III., Shylock, Louis XI. and Becket, it is apparently impossible. The truth is that the Lyceum version of "The Lady of Lyons" was a mistake. The play lost its robustness, and in doing so lost its *raison d'être*. Mr. Clement Scott is no unkindly critic either of Miss Terry or Sir Henry Irving, but even he was forced to protest. "It will be a question for consideration," he wrote, "even by such as are crazed on the subject of the last century, and are persuaded of the value of Miss Ellen Terry as a picturesque representative of the time of high waists and sack dresses, of muslin caps and long mittens, whether a point is not strained by boldly turning Pauline into a French Olivia. To enable Miss Terry, graceful and artistic as she is, to appear constantly on the stage as if she were sitting for a picture by Mr. Marcus Stone, or Mr. Orchardson, it is apparently necessary to alter the character of a standard and classical work. For your French Olivia cannot be strictly true to her

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

costume if she does not assume a lissome movement and a lackadaisical air. She must be ever in the minor key, and studiously avoid scenes and excitement. She is to harmonize with the flattened flowers on the needlework that adorns the chairs of her boudoir. But, with all due deference to the particular fancy of to-day, this is not the Pauline of Bulwer Lytton's play. The author did not hesitate to say precisely what he meant. He called his work 'The Lady of Lyons; or, Love and Pride'; and he gave us for a heroine a proud, strong-hearted woman. She is in her greatest scene the type of indignation and wounded pride, and when she had been tricked she pours out the vials of her wrath and passionate despair upon the head of the man who has injured her. This is how Helen Faucit played the part, and this is how the author by his stage directions meant it to be played. But the 'wild laugh' of the injured Pauline did not suit the studied decorum of the mob-cap period. 'Know her?' says Glavis,

ELLEN TERRY

‘Who does not? As pretty as Venus, and as proud as Juno.’ Where, then, was the pride of the new Pauline; where were her indignation, her remorse, and her scorn? They were not there, and apparently they were not wanted. Fascinated by the picturesque appearance of the actress, and watching her power of assimilating herself to the decoration of the scene, the audience was content to accept for a proud Pauline, a tender, tearful, and sympathetic lady, who has no heart to rail and no strength to curse. This, however, is an age of surprises, and there were others beside the die-away heroine. The tenderly fragile, the constantly fainting, and tearfully pathetic Pauline of Miss Ellen Terry will not surprise more than the deeply tragic, absorbed and highly nervous Claude Melnotte of Mr. Henry Irving. He brings to bear all the weight of his intelligence, his reflection, and the depth of his earnestness upon a character that is directly antagonistic to the sombreness of his manner and to the

THE FIRST LYCEUM SEASON

accepted peculiarities of his style. If the Pauline of Miss Ellen Terry is overcharged with fantastic sentiment, the Claude of Mr. Irving is overwhelmed with abiding sorrow." I need make no apology for including this vigorous indictment in a book which is appreciative rather than critical. The fame of Ellen Terry is in nowise diminished by the fact that for the Pauline of Lord Lytton's play she substituted a charming creature who, "in pale amber, moved gracefully about her settees and spinettes, or lolled upon mossy banks in the garden of an old *château*, or trembled with emotion in white satin and primrose ribbons." And it is fair to add that a brilliant first-night audience received the new Lady of Lyons with unbounded enthusiasm. At the conclusion of the piece they were not satisfied until the curtain had been raised again and again, and the customary speech had been delivered. Up to that time, at all events, it seemed as if there were no such word as fail in the Lyceum lexicon.

CHAPTER VIII

RUTH MEADOWS AND QUEEN HENRIETTA
MARIA

THE month of June, 1879, will always be memorable in the annals of the London theatres by reason of the visit of the Comédie Française, the chief feature of which was the meteoric triumph of Sarah Bernhardt. In spite, however, of the unparalleled attractions which Mr. Hollingshead held out at the Gaiety, on the other side of Wellington Street, the audience at the Lyceum were as large and as enthusiastic as ever. Henry Irving and Ellen Terry held their own against a company which included such superb artists as Gotthelf Delaunay, Coquelin *Ainé*, Febvre, Mounet Sully, and Worms, as well as Milles. Favart, Reichenberg, Barretta, Jeanne Samary, and



Window and Grove, photo.]

RUTH MEADOWS, ETC.

as we have already said, the incomparable Sarah. On the 29th of May, 1879, a performance was given at the Lyceum for the benefit of Henry Marston, an actor who was compelled to leave the stage on account of failing health, at which Miss Terry and Mr. Charles Kelly played Iris and Diogenes in a two-part comedietta by Alfred Thompson entitled "All is Vanity; or, The Cynic's Defeat." A few days later, on the 6th of June, "The Fate of Eugene Aram," by W. G. Wills, was revived, Ellen Terry playing Ruth Meadows for the first time. She made all that could possibly be made of the part, and in the last scenes was at once impressive and sympathetic. Indeed, whatever she had to do, she did exquisitely. From beginning to end, however, the play is so entirely dominated by the personality of Aram, that the part of Ruth Meadows is comparatively unimportant. In the next Lyceum revival, Miss Terry had a chance more worthy of her powers, and was not slow to take advantage of it. On the 27th

ELLEN TERRY

of June W. G. Wills's "Charles I." was revived, when Miss Terry, of course, impersonated Queen Henrietta Maria, the part originally played by Miss Isabel Bateman. "Charles I." is undoubtedly one of the best dramas which its author ever wrote, and yet it is impossible, unreservedly, to call it a fine play, in spite of many really beautiful lines and some extremely effective situations. The following verses, spoken by the king in the last scene of all, if they are not dramatic poetry, are an uncommonly good imitation of it :

"Oh, my loved solace on my thorny road,
Sweet clue in all my labyrinth of sorrow,
What shall I leave to thee ?
To thee do I consign my memory !
Oh, banish not my name from off thy lips
Because it pains awhile in naming it.
Harsh grief doth pass in time into far music.
Red-eyed Regret, that waiteth on thy steps,
Will daily grow a gentle dear companion,
And hold sweet converse with thee of thy dead.
I fear me I may sometimes fade from thee,
That when thy heart expelleth gray-stolen grief
I live no longer in thy memory.

RUTH MEADOWS, ETC.

Oh, keep my place in it for ever green,
All hung with the immortelles of thy love ;
That sweet abiding in thy inner thought
I long for more than sculptured monument
Or proudest record 'mong the tombs of kings."

This is a fair specimen of the writing of the play throughout—sometimes it is not so good, often it is much better. The piece moves from strong situation to strong situation, and culminates in an admirable final scene, and yet the whole is eminently unsatisfactory, and is only rendered possible by such magnificent interpretation as it received at the hands of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. In his desire to enlist the sympathies of the audience for the unfortunate king, Mr. Wills went to the outrageous length of making Cromwell, not merely base and sinister—a very prince of lies and treachery—but absolutely weak and foolish. A foolish Cromwell is as inconceivable as a feeble Hercules or an unlovely Venus. The "exigencies of the drama" certainly did not demand so mon-

ELLEN TERRY

strous a travesty of history ; in point of fact, the play loses in dramatic power by reason of this Cromwell, in whom nobody can for an instant believe. But good or bad, Mr. Wills's "Charles I." offered the two principal players in it exceptionally fine opportunities for the display of their powers. The Charles I. of Sir Henry Irving is one of the most memorable of his performances ; the Henrietta Maria of Ellen Terry is in every respect worthy of it. She showed us a woman who was exquisitely feminine, but who nevertheless was every inch a queen. Nothing could be more tender on the one hand : on the other, nothing could be more austere royal. All the impatience of opposition of the daughter of a long and proud line of kings was exhibited side by side with magnificent graciousness and a gentleness which won all hearts. And in the last scene, when the queen takes farewell of her doomed husband, Ellen Terry was so infinitely pathetic that she reached absolute

RUTH MEADOWS, ETC.

greatness. Mr. William Archer, a critic whose influence on the modern English stage has been almost wholly for good, and who adds to a natural gift of critical analysis wide erudition as well as the power of forcible expression, wrote of this scene some years ago: "I am myself peculiarly sensitive to such heroism as Charles shows in his last moments. From his entrance onwards, I have 'a lump in my throat'; but it grows no larger as the scene progresses. There is no gradation, no climax. One feels that some accent of living truth, some touch of inspired nature, is wanting. An inspired actor could not but know how to place 'a sorrow's crown of sorrow' upon such a scene." In this matter I venture to differ from Mr. Archer, and in doing so I believe that the vast majority of playgoers will agree with me. For me there is a climax, a "sorrow's crown of sorrow," and a climax that is almost terrible in its unforced pathos. One sympathizes, it need hardly be said, with the king who is going

ELLEN TERRY

splendidly to death, but one sympathizes yet more acutely with the queen, for her plight is the more pitiable one. How profoundly impressed Miss Terry is with the last act of "Charles I." we know from a letter published in Mr. Freeman Wills's biography of his brother, in which, writing to the author of the play, she says: "I'm just returned from our last rehearsal of 'Charles I.' and, coming home in my carriage, have been reading the last act, and I can't help writing to thank you and bless you for having written those *five last pages*. Never, *never* has anything more beautiful been written in English—I know no other language. They are perfection—and I—often as I've acted with Henry Irving in the play, am *all melted* at reading it again. An immortality for you for this alone." On the 9th of July Ellen Terry had her benefit, when "Hamlet" was played. The nights of the 25th and 26th were given up to Irving's benefit, when a remarkable programme was gone through, which com-

RUTH MEADOWS, ETC.

prised the first act of "Richard III." (in which Miss Terry appeared as Lady Anne), the fourth act of "Richelieu," the fourth act of "Charles I." (in which Ellen Terry played Queen Henrietta Maria), the third act of "Louis XI.," the third act of "Hamlet" (with Ellen Terry as Ophelia), and "Raising the Wind," in which Irving repeated his impersonation of Jeremy Diddler. In his speech on the last night of this brilliant season, Mr. Irving threatened his audience with the revival of some of the plays which were the delight of our grandfathers, such as "The Stranger," "The Gamester," and "The Iron Chest." The last-named was actually played at the opening of the new season. Ellen Terry had no part in the revival, but her sister, Miss Florence Terry, impersonated Lady Helen with considerable success. "The Stranger" and "The Gamester" were happily left in the oblivion which is most justly their due.

At the end of the season Ellen Terry

ELLEN TERRY

and Henry Irving parted company for a time, but within a few days of the closing of the Lyceum Miss Terry was at work again. Success certainly made her anything but lazy; she had no notion of resting on her laurels. In one of those periodicals which are born only to die after a few months of struggling life, Miss Terry summed up what she conceived to be the necessary qualities of a successful actor in the following words: "*First a good heart*, and then three 'I's'—'Common report is a common liar.' I don't believe anyone can act *well* unless they have a good heart. I hear of this man, or that woman, so and so to their discredit—I see them act, and when they act well, I *know* Report has spoken falsely. No words could convince my understanding. But other qualities are necessary before the art of emotion can make itself felt; and these are, Imagination, Individuality, and Industry. Imagination will give the insight required to make an actor one with the

RUTH MEADOWS, ETC.

character he is assuming; individuality, if sufficiently developed, will enable him to hold any audience; and industry—well, without that no one ever became an artist on the stage or in the studio. I don't mean to say that beauty is not an immense aid to an actress in a successful theatrical career. Still you can get on without beauty, but it is impossible for an actress to achieve any distinction without Imagination, Individuality, and Industry. After all, as far as the stage is concerned, beauty has not much more power than a favourable criticism; it can attract people—it can make them, perhaps, come once—but it cannot make them stay." Whatever we may think of her imagination and individuality, we cannot dispute Miss Terry's industry, for it is a matter of fact and not of opinion. The provincial tour which she commenced soon after the London season had come to an end began at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, on the 18th of August, when "New Men and Old Acres" was

ELLEN TERRY

performed for several nights to audiences who received Ellen Terry's Lilian Vavasour with enthusiasm. On the 22nd of August Miss Terry took a benefit, and appeared in scenes from "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," and "The School for Scandal." At Glasgow, on the 12th of September, a new piece called "Butterfly," which was a free adaptation of "Frou-frou," was produced, and, judging by the comments of the press, Miss Terry played with her usual distinction and charm. Later in the month, at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool, Charles Reade's adaptation of Tennyson's poem, entitled "Dora," was revived. It will be remembered that on the original production of this piece, Miss Kate Terry gave a fine impersonation of the title-part. In the revival at Liverpool her sister was not less successful. Later in the autumn, Ellen Terry returned to London to resume her duties at the Lyceum Theatre.

CHAPTER IX

PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

THE horrors of "The Iron Chest" haunted the Lyceum stage for a little over a fortnight, during which Mr. Irving had the satisfaction of achieving considerable success in a part associated with the illustrious names of John Kemble, Elliston, Young, and last, but greatest of all, Edmund Kean. On the 15th of October, 1879, the younger Colman's depressing version of "The Adventures of Caleb Williams" gave way to a revival of "Hamlet," in which Ellen Terry resumed the part of Ophelia. Mr. Irving had spent a portion of his summer holiday in cruising about the Mediterranean in the Baroness Burdett-Coutts's yacht. The charm of that sunny sea and of the countries whose shores it washes induced

ELLEN TERRY

him to turn his attention to those plays of Shakespeare the scene of which is laid in Italy. After much deliberation he decided to abandon the revival of "The Stranger" and "The Gamester," and to produce "The Merchant of Venice" on a scale entirely unparalleled in its magnificence. The pains which he took were enormous: the ingenuity which he exhibited amounted, in the phrase of Mr. William Archer, almost to "spontaneous generation." Up to that time, no play had been mounted with such astonishing care and completeness. Mr. Hawes Craven, Mr. W. Hann, Mr. W. Telbin, and Mr. Cuthbert exceeded themselves in the creation of marvelously realistic stage pictures; the costumes were a delight to the eye, and recalled the pictures of Moroni and Veronese; the minor accessories, though extremely elaborate, were exquisitely appropriate. In the stage management of the play, Mr. Irving showed something akin to genius. Under these splendid circumstances, Ellen Terry

PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

assumed the part of Portia on the 1st of November, 1879. She was destined to repeat and, indeed, largely to increase her former success, but the revival of "The Merchant of Venice" and her share in it by no means escaped hostile criticism. Perhaps the most important, because the most intelligent, of all the attacks appeared in "Blackwood's Magazine." The unqualified censure which the writer metes out alike to the production of the play and to the acting, almost betrays personal feeling in the matter. After analyzing the character of Portia at some length and with considerable acumen, the anonymous critic says: "If we are right in this conception of Portia, then Miss Terry's impersonation fails in its most essential point. Even those who have racked the language of panegyric in its praise have shrunk from claiming unqualified admiration for her in the trial scene. They might well do so, for at no point in it does she indicate that she appreciates the situation, or how it

ELLEN TERRY

should be treated. The words are spoken, but so spoken that one marvels why they should issue from the lips of one who looks so little in earnest, who takes so little note of Shylock, or Antonio, of the Doge, and of the court, every one of whom it is her business to impress by the manner in which she discharges the function of determining the matter at issue, which has been delegated to her by the Duke. We have spoken first of this scene because it is the touchstone of the actress's powers, and because our love of Shakespeare forbids us to be blinded by the attractions of either actor or actress to any failure in a due conception of the character he has drawn for us with so firm a hand. But the shortcomings of Miss Terry, in our apprehension, begin at an earlier stage. She turns the character 'to favour and to prettiness'; but she does not even aim at the distinction and the dignity which essentially belong to it. She is not the great lady of Belmont, the self-possessed queenly creature, whose

PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

very presence turns men of ordinary mould into poets, and attracts, even while she holds them at bay in admiring reverence. She fails especially to suggest the Portia that, as Shakespeare most carefully makes us aware, would have sacrificed even her love for Bassanio, deep as we see it is, had he failed to win her by the process appointed by her father. How little this feature of the character is felt by the actress is made apparent in her treatment of the passage where she urges Bassanio to tarry, 'to pause a day or two,' before he tries his fortune with the caskets. Throughout all this fine speech she holds him caressingly by the hand, nay, almost in an embrace, with all the unrestrained fondness which is conceivable only after he had actually won her. This, too, when all eyes are fixed upon her, and when her demeanour would have made her secret known to all the world in the last way a lady would court under any circumstances, but especially when, had her lover chosen wrong, she must have

ELLEN TERRY

parted from him for once and for ever. There is altogether too much of what Rosalind calls 'a coming-on disposition' in Miss Terry's bearing towards her lover. A similar forgetfulness of what truth to the character and the situation demands, while the Prince of Morocco is making choice among the caskets, is visible in the far too marked demonstrativeness with which Miss Terry follows his movements from casket to casket. The room is full of people, servants and others, any one of whom could tell us in a second from Miss Terry's looks and movements when, in the words of the old game, he was hot, and when he was cold, and could have sold the information to the next wooer that arrived. It requires subtler touches than this lady seems to have at her command to indicate, without exaggerating, the emotion proper to a nature disciplined like Portia's to self-command." After this scolding, the writer is so gracious as to admit that "there is, notwithstanding what we have said, much

PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

that is agreeable and attractive in Miss Terry's Portia, and no one will be surprised that uncritical people, who have not made their own separate study of the play, should be delighted with it."

The writer of the above is so generous as to admit that Miss Terry's Portia will be found satisfactory to such playgoers as have not burnt the midnight oil in studying the text of "The Merchant of Venice," but he is amazed that the critics, the "preachers appointed," could find it compatible with their duty to praise without reserve her impersonation of the Lady of Belmont. And yet the critics as a whole were not a whit less enthusiastic than the public for whose benefit the play was, in the first instance, produced. If they erred, they did so with singular unanimity. We know how warmly Miss Terry's Portia was received when she first played the part at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1875. When she took up the part again at the Lyceum, four years later, it was held on all sides that her in-

ELLEN TERRY

terpretation had materially improved. Her touch was finer, her rendering in every respect more delicate and more finished. "The beauty of Miss Terry's Portia," wrote Mr. Joseph Knight, "is incontestable. An instance of perfect exposition is presented, and the business introduced is always subtle, poetical, and significant. Got up in exact imitation of those stately Venetian dames who still gaze down from the pictures of Paolo Veronese, Miss Terry looks in every respect the Lady of Belmont of the story or the play. Her delivery is just and pure, and her performance is a remarkable instance of interpretation." When we recall the adorably graceful woman whom Ellen Terry portrayed with such consummate skill, it is hardly possible to believe that the part was "created"—to use an inexact but convenient term—by a boy, probably Alexander Cooke, who played the heroines of Shakespeare's comedies during the poet's lifetime. It would appear that the first woman who

PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

ever acted Portia was Mrs. Sanderson, who appeared in the part at Drury Lane Theatre in 1741, when Macklin acted Shylock so magnificently that the play, hitherto unpopular, became a great favourite. Kitty Clive and Margaret Woffington both distinguished themselves as Portia in their day, and Mrs. Siddons played the part in December, 1775, but it does not appear to have been amongst the best of that majestic lady's impersonations. In more recent times Helen Faucit and Mrs. Charles Kean were notably successful in realizing one of the most fascinating of all Shakespeare's women. Without venturing on the dangerous ground of flattery, it is safe to say that Ellen Terry proved herself worthy of her predecessors in the part. Indeed, she exceeded all of them if we are to accept the opinion of Mr. William Winter, who declares that "when Ellen Terry embodied Portia—in Henry Irving's magnificent revival of 'The Merchant of Venice'—the essential womanhood of the

ELLEN TERRY

character was, for the first time in the modern theatre, adequately interpreted and conveyed. Upon many play-going observers, indeed, the wonderful wealth of beauty that is in the part—its winsome grace, its incessant sparkle, its alluring, because piquant as well as luscious sweetness, its impetuous ardour, its enchantment of physical equally with emotional condition, its august morality, its perfect candour and its noble passion—came like a surprise. Did the great actress find those attributes in the part (they asked themselves), or did she infuse them into it? Previous representatives of Portia had placed the emphasis chiefly, if not exclusively, upon morals and mind. The stage Portia of the past has usually been a didactic lady, self-contained, formal, conventional, and oratorical. Ellen Terry came, and Portia was figured exactly as she lives in the pages of Shakespeare—an imperial and yet an enchanting woman, dazzling in her beauty, royal in her dignity,

PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

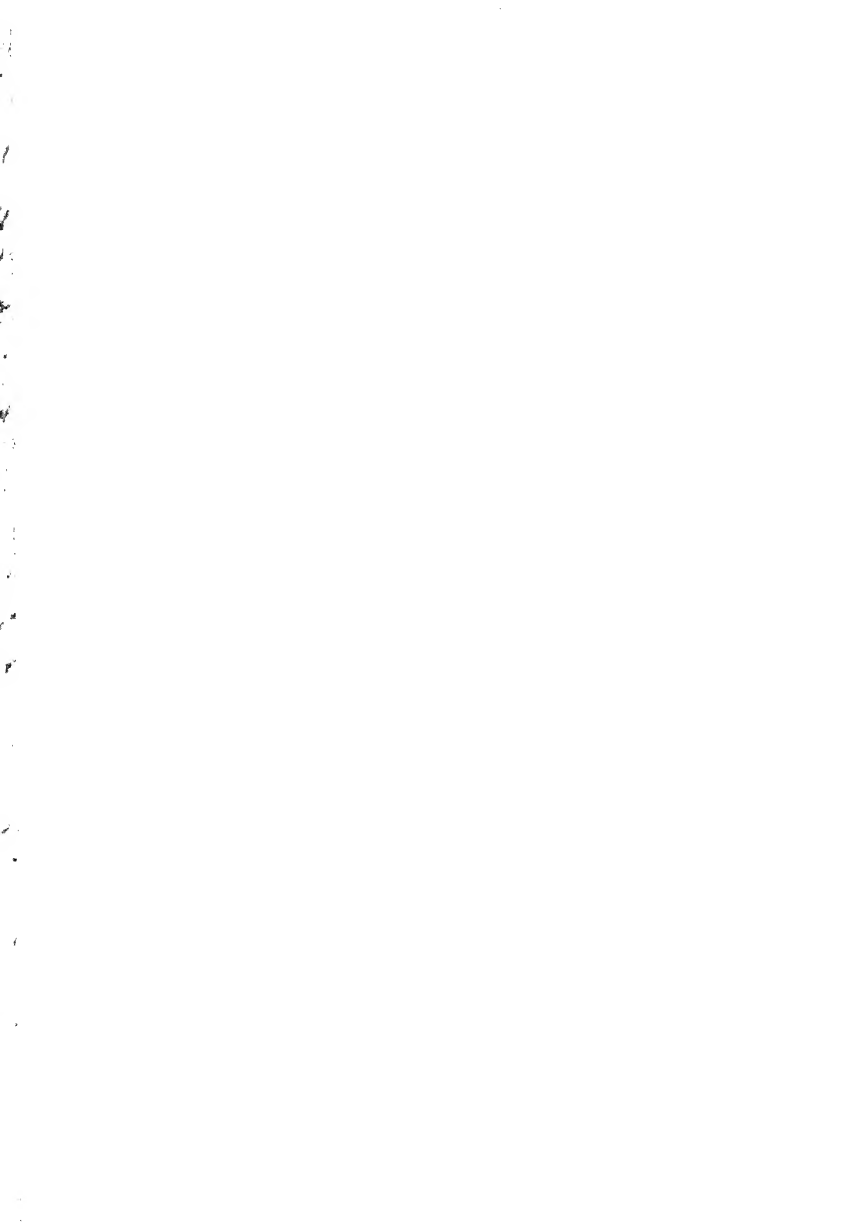
as ardent in temperament as she is fine in brain and various and splendid in personal peculiarities and feminine charm. After seeing that matchless impersonation, it seemed strange that Portia should ever have been represented in any other light, and it was furthermore felt that the inferior, mechanical, utilitarian semblance of her could not again be endured. Ellen Terry's achievement was a complete vindication of the high view that Shakespearean study has almost always taken of that character, and it finally discredited the old stage notion that Portia is a type of decorum and declamation." Without endorsing every word of Mr. Winter's glowing eulogy, it remains true that Ellen Terry abolished for ever the priggish and unfeminine Portia from the theatre. It is worth noting that "the old stage notion" upon which Mr. Winter is so severe was shared by no less a critic than Hazlitt. It is undoubtedly curious that a man, distinguished alike as a literary and dramatic

ELLEN TERRY

critic, should have arrived at such a conclusion, looking to the surpassing loveliness of Portia's temperament. It was to this loveliness that Ellen Terry instinctively gave special prominence. That she was rightly guided by her instinct, is in great measure proved by the immense popularity of her rendering of the part both in England and America. Some people may prefer her Ophelia, others her Beatrice, but nearly all will agree that Portia is one of her most delightful and convincing performances. Of Miss Terry's acting in the trial scene many interesting opinions have been expressed by distinguished men who have an unquestionable right to be heard. In the opinion of Tennyson, for example, her performance in the scene was slightly wanting in dignity and authority. The present Lord Chief Justice of England, on the other hand, has expressed his astonishment that she should be so entirely lawyer-like. In his opinion she wore the advocate's robe to the manner



Window and Grove, photo.]



PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

born, and caught the forensic style to perfection. The Lyceum revival of "The Merchant of Venice" was successful beyond Henry Irving's utmost hope. In his interesting book entitled "Henry Irving in England and America," Mr. Frederick Daly tells us that the piece "was played for two hundred and fifty nights, the longest representation of any Shakespearean play. It had been one of Mr. Irving's designs, when he became a manager, to present several plays for a limited number of nights every season; but, as he plaintively remarked in one of his speeches, the public would persist in coming in such numbers, and with such unflagging interest, to see the production, that he was obliged to defer to the popular wish, and keep a play on the boards for months instead of weeks."

On the occasion of Miss Terry's benefit, on the 20th of May, 1880, the last act of "The Merchant of Venice" was omitted, and a short piece by W. G. Wills, entitled

ELLEN TERRY

"Iolanthe," and described by its author as an Idyll, was played for the first time. "Iolanthe" proved to be a version of the Danish play, "King René's Daughter," by Henrik Herz. The first adaptation of the piece seen in London was acted at the Strand Theatre in 1849, when Mrs. Stirling took the part of the blind daughter of the king. Some time after, Mrs. Charles Kean played Iolanthe in another version at the Haymarket. At the same theatre, in 1855, Miss Helen Faucit appeared in a translation of "King René's Daughter," by Sir (then Mr.) Theodore Martin, and her impersonation was so touching that it evoked enthusiastic applause, and took a place amongst the favourite items of her repertory. In this part Miss Terry was not less successful; the pathetic Iolanthe served as an admirable foil to the brilliant and vivacious Portia, and strongly emphasized the versatility of the actress. As Count Tristan, Mr. Irving, who is not always at home in the business of love-making, was not

PORTIA AT THE LYCEUM

so well suited as his colleague. "Iolanthe" became so popular that it was played after "The Merchant of Venice" up to the end of the run. The single scene in which the whole action of Mr. Wills's Idyll took place represented a wonderfully picturesque garden. It is amongst the finest stage pictures which Mr. Hawes Craven has painted for the Lyceum, and it is hardly possible to give it higher praise than this.

In the autumn of the year Miss Terry toured the provinces with a company of her own, and played in "The Merchant of Venice," "The School for Scandal," and other classical plays. In October she took the part of Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing" at Leeds for the first time in her career.

CHAPTER X

CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

HENRY IRVING's management of the Lyceum Theatre has frequently, and not altogether unfairly, been indicted on the ground that, while he has given the Shakespearean drama magnificent illustration, he has done little to encourage living playwrights to produce work which, in the course of time, might itself become classical. In this respect Irving has been compared to Macready, and it must be confessed that the comparison has been heavily in favour of the latter. In the last two or three years, however, Sir Henry Irving has made a most praiseworthy effort to rival his great predecessor in the production of original plays. That his experiments have not been crowned with the complete success one



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "CAMMA" IN "THE CUP."



CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

might wish for them is distinctly unfortunate, but he is the last man in the world to be daunted by temporary failure. Of the work of the late poet laureate, Irving has always been an ardent admirer, and his admiration has taken practical form in the production of two of Tennyson's plays. On the 18th of April, 1876, Irving appeared as Philip of Spain in "Queen Mary," at the Lyceum, under the management of Mr. Bateman, and so delighted the author that he declared the impersonation of the Spanish king to be a consummate performance, and ranked it with Salvini's Othello. In a letter to Tennyson, describing the first performance of "Queen Mary," Browning wrote: "The love as well as admiration for the author was conspicuous; indeed I don't know whether you ought to have been present to enjoy it, or were not safer in absence from a smothering of flowers and deafening 'tumult of acclaim,' but Hallam was there to report, and Mrs. Tennyson is with you

ELLEN TERRY

to believe." Browning adds: "Irving was very good indeed, and the others did their best, nor so badly." "Queen Mary," in spite of its enthusiastic reception by the first-night audience, did not settle down into a popular success, and managers naturally hesitated for a long time to accept anything else from Tennyson's pen. In 1879, however, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal produced "The Falcon" at the St. James's Theatre, and it had a run of sixty-seven nights. Towards the end of 1880, Tennyson completed "The Cup." The idea of the play, founded on Plutarch's story, came to the poet when reading the following paragraph in Lecky's "History of European Morals": "A powerful noble once solicited the hand of a Galatian lady named Camma who, faithful to her husband, resisted all his entreaties. Resolved at any hazard to succeed, he caused her husband to be assassinated, and when she took refuge in the Temple of Diana, and enrolled herself among the priestesses, he sent noble after

CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

noble to induce her to relent. After a time he ventured himself into her presence. She feigned willingness to yield, but told him it was first necessary to make a libation to the goddess. She appeared as a priestess before the altar bearing in her hand a cup of wine, which she had poisoned. She drank half of it herself, handed the remainder to her guilty lover, and when he had drained the cup to the dregs, burst into a fierce thanksgiving that she had been permitted to avenge and was soon to rejoin her murdered husband." In relation to the stage production of "The Cup," the present Lord Tennyson, in his memoir of his father, records the fact that the poet said to the late William Allingham: "I gave Irving my 'Thomas à Becket': he said it was magnificent, but it would cost him £3,000 to mount it: he couldn't afford the risk. If well put on the stage it would act for a time, and it would bring me credit (he said), but it wouldn't pay. He said, 'If you give me something short I'll do it. So

ELLEN TERRY

I wrote him a play in two acts, 'The Cup.'"
On the 4th of December, 1880, Mr. Knowles wrote to Tennyson: "Irving is in a great state of excitement, and he is most anxious that you should read over the Play, not only to himself and Ellen Terry, but to all the Company which is to enact it. . . . He would like it to be on next Thursday week, when Ellen Terry will be back in town and everything advanced enough to make such a reading of the greatest and most opportune value."

The reading took place under the circumstances which Irving so strongly desired, and the play (after a few slight alterations had been made in it) was produced on the 3rd of January, 1881, before a brilliant audience, which included Mr. Gladstone among many other celebrities. "The Cup" was destined to succeed better than either "Queen Mary" or "The Falcon." Of Miss Terry's share in it Mr. Wedmore wrote in "The Academy": "I have seldom seen Miss Ellen Terry to greater advantage than

CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

as Camma. The part—which, in another version of the tale, Ristori, it seems, has acted before her—allows room for the suggestion, if not for the complete development, of all that she can do most satisfactorily, and is almost without trace of any of those demands which she fulfils less perfectly. The part abounds in occasions for the display of her particular gifts, which are gentleness, pathos, and grace. She speaks already with conviction, but she might speak with more fire and impulse Camma's patriotic call to resistance to Rome. Once or twice it is felt that the lines she is delivering are capable of an intensity that she does not bestow on them. Once or twice it is felt that an actress of larger physical resource would 'let herself go' where Miss Terry reins herself in, and would produce a great and legitimate effect where Miss Terry makes no great point. But those changes of the voice which betoken gathering excitement, in speeches of appeal, come at the moments when they are most requisite,

ELLEN TERRY

as, especially, in the moment of Camma's second appeal to the goddess in her temple—that beginning 'Artemis, Artemis,' in a tone dictated by profound feeling or arrived at by a self-concealing art. And if Miss Terry is not seldom ready with the required accent of passion, she is at all times ready with the required movement of grace. To some of us, in past performances, that grace has seemed too obviously studied; it has been so chiefly when what are called statuesque attitudes were assumed in dresses of the day. In modern drama the term 'statuesque attitude' implies a measure of mild reproach, for attitudes of the heroines of the day should be graceful and lifelike—not graceful and statuesque. It is not sculpture, with its arrested movement, that you want most to recall in representations of daily life; it is the infinitely varied gesture of daily life. I do not myself see, however, that Miss Terry is open to this reproach, even in the representations of contemporary life. But what may be a little dubious

CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

there becomes, in such a piece as the present tragedy, distinctly a point for praise. Under her thin, sea-green raiment of lissome stuff, the movement and arrested movement of the actress are equally perfect. Aided by draperies arranged with the most singular skill, the figure, in its freedom and suavity, recalls the Elgin Marbles and the designs of the artist who has learnt the best use from them—Mr. Albert Moore. In hue and line the actress is a realization of Mr. Moore's paintings." For it to be said of any player that she realizes one of the women of Mr. Albert Moore's pictures is praise indeed, but in this case it is no more than the simple truth. Exquisite and impressive as were the scenes in which Camma moved, she was at all times their most lovely feature. In the Temple of Artemis—that wonderful triumph of the skill of Mr. Hawes Craven—Camma was not for an instant dwarfed by the splendour of her surroundings. Even when Miss Terry fails to realize our ex-

ELLEN TERRY

pectations, even when she is ill-suited to her part, she is invariably picturesque. As Camma she was as beautifully picturesque as she has ever been in her life. And her exquisite voice has seldom been heard to greater advantage than in some of the passages of "The Cup." Surely Tennyson had that voice in his mind when he wrote the lines beginning :

" Moon on the field and the foam,
Moon on the waste and the wold,
Moon bring him home, bring him home
Safe from the dark and the cold,
Home, sweet moon, bring him home,
Home with the flock to the fold."

And surely there have been few actresses in any age who could have delivered with greater effect the tremendous appeal to Artemis when the catastrophe is drawing near :

" O thou, that slayest the babe within the womb
Or in the being born, or after slayest him
As boy or man—great Goddess, whose storm-voice
Unsockets the strong oak, and rears his root
Beyond his head, and strews our fruits, and lays

CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

Our golden grain, and runs to sea and makes it
Foam over all the fleeted wealth of kings,
And peoples, hear !
Who bringest plague and fever, whose quick flash
Smites the memorial pillar to the dust,
Who causes the safe earth to shake and gape,
And gulf and flatten in her closing chasm
Doomed cities, hear !
Whose lava-torrents blast and blacken a province
To a cinder, hear !
Whose water-cataracts find a realm and leave it
A waste of rock and ruin, hear ! I call thee
To make my marriage prosper to my wish."

In a letter to the author, Ellen Terry describes "The Cup" as a "great little play." It certainly deserved the first of the adjectives as it was interpreted at the Lyceum, and it went some distance to justify George Eliot's opinion that Tennyson was, after all, a dramatist for the stage as well as the study. A play which draws crowded houses for over a hundred and twenty-five nights may fairly be considered a popular success.

"The Cup" did not occupy more than an hour and a half in the playing, and during the first part of the run "The Cor-

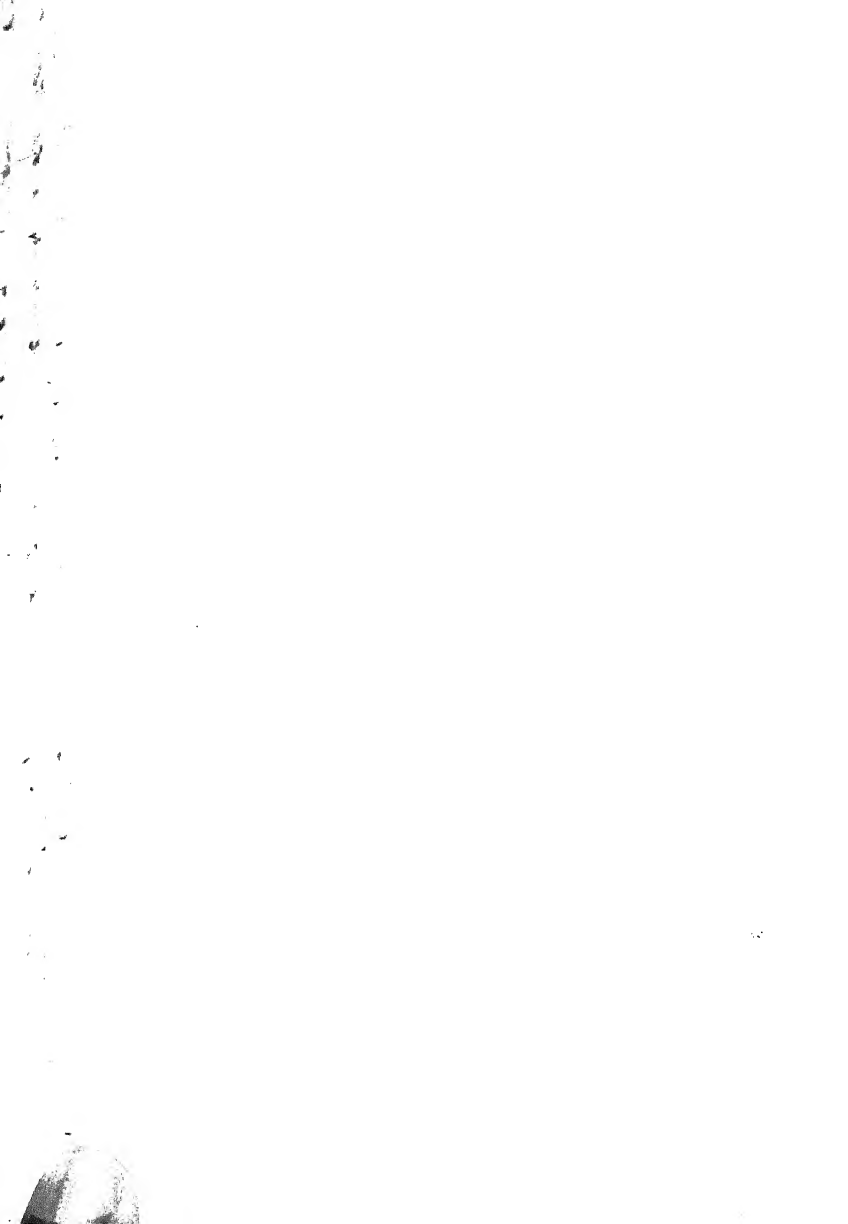
ELLEN TERRY

sican Brothers," in which Ellen Terry did not appear, was performed after it. On the 16th of April a change was made in the bill, "The Belle's Stratagem" being acted before Tennyson's tragedy. Miss Terry took the part of Letitia Hardy, and was once more afforded the opportunity of playing two parts in acute contrast to one another on the same evening. From the gay and sprightly heroine of Mrs. Cowley's comedy to the High Priestess of Artemis is indeed a long step. In the part of Letitia Hardy, Miss Terry was delightfully vivacious, arch, and distinguished, and most playgoers will agree with Mr. William Archer in considering it amongst the most exquisite of her impersonations. She wore the belle's adorable costumes—the "precious" adjective may surely be excused in this connection—with as much grace and ease as she did the strange and wonderful draperies of Camma. Miss Terry's gift of wearing appropriately the dresses of the different characters which



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "LETITIA HARDY" IN



CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

she plays is amazing. That this is no easy task, anybody who has ventured to appear at a fancy dress ball in costume will at once admit.

It may be doubted whether Irving ever proved his sagacity as a manager more conclusively than when he invited the greatest of American actors, Edwin Booth, to perform with him at the Lyceum in "Othello." This admirable piece of diplomacy has generally been counted to Irving for magnanimity: it seems to me that it was quite as creditable to the qualities of his head as to those of his heart. It certainly showed the confidence which he had in his own powers that he should venture to persuade his only rival amongst English-speaking actors to measure his strength with him in the very difficult parts of Othello and Iago. The result amply justified a step which supplied Irving with an almost irresistible and perfectly honourable passport to the esteem of the American people. The first performance of "Othello" in which Booth

ELLEN TERRY

and Irving played together took place on the 2nd of May. Booth filled the title-part, Irving that of Iago, William Terriss was Cassio, Mr. Mead, Brabantio, and Mr. Pinero, Roderigo, while Miss Terry played Desdemona in a manner entirely worthy of the great actors who took the two principal characters. She emphasized with wonderful skill the defenceless innocence, the modesty, the tenderness, the unalterable yet artless devotion of the ill-fated heroine of Shakespeare's tragedy. Her affection for the Moor seemed to rise inevitably, so that it seemed natural for her to declare :

" My love doth so approve him
That even his stubbornness, his checks, and frowns,
Have grace and favour in them."

If not so important an impersonation as her Ophelia and her Portia, Miss Terry's Desdemona was quite as meritorious.

On the 18th of June "Hamlet" was revived, and on the 23rd of July, the last performance of the season, Mr. Irving and Miss Terry were seen in some passage

CAMMA AND DESDEMONA

from "The Hunchback," the former playing Modus, and the latter, Helen. In his speech on this occasion, Mr. Irving announced that when the theatre re-opened "Two Roses" would be revived, with Miss Terry in the cast, but the part which it was intended she should play was eventually undertaken by Miss Winifred Emery. The cast was a very strong one, including as it did Mr. Howe, Mr. Terriss, and Mr. David James, besides, of course, Mr. Irving who resumed his wonderful performance of Digby Grant. The innumerable admirers of the brilliant manager of the St. James's Theatre, Mr. George Alexander, will be interested to know that he made his first appearance in London in this revival as Caleb Deecie. The first performance was given on Boxing Day, 1881. The piece, however, seemed somewhat old-fashioned, and hardly retained its former hold on the affections of playgoers.

CHAPTER XI

JULIET AND BEATRICE

WE have now to deal with the revival of "Romeo and Juliet," which took place on the 8th of March, 1882, and called forth a great deal of adverse criticism, and some positive abuse. I do not pretend to know the reasons which induced Irving to stage this play, but it may well be that Miss Kate Terry's success in the part of Juliet fired her sister with the ambition to attempt the character, and that Irving decided to afford her an opportunity to do so. In his capacity of manager Irving left no stone unturned, deemed no effort too laborious to secure a triumph. He could not command success, but he did everything in his power to deserve it. In the little manifesto which, following the example of Charles Kean, he



Window and Grove, photo.]



JULIET AND BEATRICE

issued with the programme, he justly says that he availed himself "of every resource at his command to illustrate, without intrusion, the Italian warmth, life, and romance of this enthralling Italian story." His first care was for the text of the play, and in this connection Mr. Clement Scott tells us that "it was high time for 'Romeo and Juliet' to be taken in hand with Shakespearean insight and reverential care, in order that the nineteenth century, in the person of Mr. Irving, might undo the mischief of the eighteenth century, under the false guidance of David Garrick. Owing to the waywardness of this great actor, or to the bad taste of the age in which he lived, or to the overweening vanity of 'a star,' there is probably no play that on the stage has been so hopelessly misunderstood. It was owing to David Garrick and Garrick's acting version that those who do not read Shakespeare have got such a false impression of the poet's idea, and probably under this influence that such critics as Coleridge and

ELLEN TERRY

Mrs. Jameson are found misinterpreted the scheme so plainly put forward in the prologue, and now restored to its proper place." The suggestion made here that Mrs. Jameson, to say nothing of Coleridge, did not read Shakespeare is certainly startling; it would be interesting to hear what that very serious and laborious lady had to say to it. Mr. Clement Scott continues: "By discarding David Garrick's version of the play, by restoring Rosaline in order to show the intensely sensitive and imaginative nature of Romeo, by letting the audience hear Shakespeare's prologue and Shakespeare's own conclusion of the tragedy, Mr. Irving has satisfied the student without in the least detracting from the value of the acting tragedy. In the great gain is deeper than that. Mr. Irving has not sacrificed one iota of local colour. The play glows and burns with the picturesqueness and fantastic beauty of old Verona. The stage, with its crowd, its conflicts, its cabals, its maskers and

JULIET AND BEATRICE

mummers, its balls and revels, is as animated and sunny as any artist would desire, and as instinct with life as any picture that ever came from the Court of Meningen."

If the subject of this book were the history of the Lyceum Theatre during the tenure of the present manager, much space might properly be devoted to the mounting of "Romeo and Juliet." Suffice it to say that Irving's skill and ingenuity were displayed to the full, with the result that the tragedy had never before been presented with anything like the same magnificence. It is obviously no part of the business of the writer of an appreciation to find fault: still less is it his duty to praise where he does not honestly believe that praise can be given. Under these circumstances I shall, in dealing with Ellen Terry's Juliet, summarize the opinions of other people, instead of stating my own. Writing in "The Athenæum," Mr. Joseph Knight tells us that Miss Terry is "a delightful and inspired actress, and her equal in the line of

ELLEN TERRY

parts that suits her cannot easily be found. To the stronger scenes of Juliet she is, however, unequal. The highest charm is negative, consisting of freedom from mannerism or affectation. There is no point at which the intensity is realized. Miss Terry has given us so many exquisite renderings of the women of Shakespeare that her failure to grasp this character may well be excused. Portions of her rendering have her known grace, beauty, and intelligence; but her Juliet is altogether inferior to her Ophelia, and far below her Portia. The anonymous critic of "The Saturday Review" contents himself with the statement that "Miss Ellen Terry is very charming, but she is not Juliet; and where really tragic passion is wanted for the part it is not forthcoming." Mr. Wedmore writes in "The Academy" that in the balcony scene Miss Terry "is satisfactory; in the potion scene and in the vault scene she is inefficient—that is to say, the Juliet that she represents is fascinated, but not consumed."



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AND MRS. STIRLING IN
"ROMEO AND JULIET."



JULIET AND BEATRICE

In the ball scene the actress makes welcome display of all her familiar graces ; in the balcony scene she is genuinely suggestive—her Juliet is under the necessary spell. No little art is shown in her winsomeness with the Nurse ; and her single line of quiet reproach to the Nurse, later on, ‘ You have comforted me marvellously,’ is said with a significance strongly marked, and a reality happily found. But the latest scenes are wanting in the imagination of tragedy. Nothing is called out of the depths. The actress deals with tragedy like an eighteenth-century portrait painter—like Romney, for instance. The first word is grace—but so is the last.” The opinions of the critics of these three important weekly journals were confirmed in a greater or less degree by nearly all those who wrote of the performance in the columns of the daily press. Praise to some parts of Miss Terry’s interpretation, blame to others, were awarded with striking unanimity. The Juliet of Ellen Terry, it

ELLEN TERRY

is certain, did not efface the profound impression produced by Adelaide Neilson's performance of that character. It should be added that Sarah Bernhardt expressed the highest admiration for Miss Terry's performance of Juliet, and was astounded that she could go on playing the part night after night during a long run without appreciable lack of freshness and spontaneity.

Whatever may be thought of the Lyceum's rendering of "Romeo and Juliet," from the artistic standpoint, it drew good houses during a run of a hundred and sixty performances. The 11th of October is memorable as the date of the production of "Much Ado About Nothing," which to me is, perhaps, the most delightful of all Irving's Shakespearean revivals. In the first place the cast was an exceptionally strong one. Besides Irving's Benedick and the Beatrice of Miss Terry, one recalls with pleasure the Don Pedro of Mr. Terriss, the Don John of Mr. Glenny, the Claudio of Mr. Forbes-Robertson, the Leonato of Mr.

JULIET AND BEATRICE

Fernandez, the Antonio of Mr. Howe, and the Hero of Miss Millward. The scenery was as magnificent as usual. Indeed, perhaps no finer picture than the interior of the church in the third act has ever been seen even on the stage of the Lyceum : it was at once a superb companion and contrast to the Temple of Artemis, which we saw in "The Cup." For any disappointment which she may have felt at the reception of her Juliet, Miss Terry must have been more than compensated by the enthusiasm which greeted her performance of Beatrice. There have been eminent critics who have seen in Beatrice nothing but an "odious woman," a termagant, a shrew, who called aloud for the tamer ; and there have been distinguished actresses, not a few, who have done their best to realize the woman of the critics' imagination. From the outset of the play, Ellen Terry made it evident that her Beatrice had nothing in common with Katherine before her submission to Petruchio. In the earlier scenes she never

ELLEN TERRY

allowed us to feel that the marriage of Beatrice and Benedick was impossible, or even preposterous or fantastic. While she indicated Beatrice's "partial antipathy" to Benedick, she did so in such a way as to convey the idea that that "partial antipathy" might reasonably develop into "perfect sympathy," indeed, into love itself. In his notes on "Much Ado About Nothing," Schlegel points out that the duel of wit and raillery between the two is in itself a "proof of growing inclination." There is no doubt that from the first the mind of Beatrice is, perhaps to her own great annoyance, full of Benedick : in the satire which she hurls at him so frequently and so keenly that it is "past the endurance of a block," there is no note of loathing or positive contempt. Beatrice, it must be remembered, is first of all a great lady, and no lady would condescend to bandy words with a man whom she merely despised. Théophile Gautier has divided human beings into two classes, flamboyant and

JULIET AND BEATRICE

drab: the Beatrice of Ellen Terry was a flamboyant of the flamboyants. She was a "pleasant spirited lady," born in a "merry hour"—a "star danced, and under that she was born." Tennyson liked Miss Terry better in the later scenes than in the earlier ones, in which he thought that she ought to have been more of "the great lady" in her playing of the part. Surely, however, great ladies, possessed of an immense fund of animal spirits, and a pretty and ever-ready gift of satire, sometimes overlook the niceties of patrician courtesy. The Beatrice of Ellen Terry did, however, improve in this respect as the play went on. It increased in dignity, and even in tenderness, without losing its joyous charm, so that at last, so far from commiserating Benedick on his approaching marriage, one felt most unrighteously envious of him. Of Irving's performance as Benedick this is not the place to speak, but I fully agree with Mr. A. B. Walkley, that he is never seen to greater advantage than in parts which

ELLEN TERRY

Shakespeare has drawn with the rich palette of the Italian Renaissance. The witty strife between Beatrice and Benedick was splendidly rendered by the two players, and one was astonished that the satire of an Elizabethan play should seem as new and fresh as it did at the Lyceum in the year 1882. After two hundred and twelve performances "Much Ado About Nothing" was withdrawn, not merely in theatrical parlance, but in sober fact, in the height of its success. It has been revived many times since then, and in some of the revivals Miss Winifred Emery has played Hero with a delicate distinction worthy of the buoyant and sparkling Beatrice of Ellen Terry.

During the run of "Much Ado About Nothing," the first visit of the Lyceum Company to America, which will be dealt with in another chapter, was arranged. In the months of June and July, 1883, nearly all the plays in the Lyceum *répertoire* were put in the bill, and acted with the utmost care,

JULIET AND BEATRICE

in order to enable the performers to present them properly on their arrival on the other side of the Atlantic. Passing mention must be made of a *matinée* of "Robert Macaire," which was given at the Lyceum Theatre on the 15th of July, in aid of the funds of the Royal College of Music. The cast was so extraordinary that it may be of interest to give it here in full: Robert Macaire, Mr. Henry Irving; Jacques Strop, Mr. J. L. Toole; Dumont, Mr. Fernandez; Charles, Mr. Terriss; Germeuil, Mr. H. Howe; Sergeant Loupy, Mr. Bancroft; Pierre, Mr. Thomas Thorne; Louis, Mr. Andrews; François, Mr. Archer; Clementine, Miss Ellen Terry; Marie, Miss Ada Cavendish. When it is stated that Mr. Toole was allowed to indulge in "gag" to his heart's content, it goes without saying that the performance was amusing, if not of serious artistic importance. "Miss Ellen Terry," said "The Daily Telegraph," "with a winning graciousness, consented to play a *rôle* of some half-dozen insignificant lines,

ELLEN TERRY

and received a round of applause, as, when in the character of Clementine, she descended at the inn door from a pretty little donkey cart, chivalrously driven by the veteran actor, Mr. Howe." A great farewell banquet was given to Mr. Irving, on the 4th of July, at St. James's Hall, which was attended by Mr. Russell Lowell, at that time the American Minister, and presided over by the late Lord Coleridge, Lord Chief Justice of England. In the course of the admirable speech in which he proposed the toast of the evening, Lord Coleridge said: "The genius of a great actor lifts him into absolute equality with the first personages of his time. Polus was the intimate friend of Sophocles and Euripides, and Garrick was the chosen friend of Burke and Dr. Johnson. Kemble lived in intimacy with Sir Walter Scott and with the King, and Mr. Irving is the friend of the great company. To us he is the last of the line of great names—Burbage, Betterton, Booth, Garrick, Kean, the Kembles, Young,

JULIET AND BEATRICE

and Macready. The list is inexhaustible, and, if it were not, I have no power to exhaust it. And what is true of actors is, of course, true of actresses also. England has a roll of great actresses of which any nation may be proud; and if on this occasion I select one name from this list of fair women, and that the name of Ellen Terry, it is not that I forget Mrs. Siddons, Miss O'Neil, Mrs. Stirling, or many other great women, living and passed away."

CHAPTER XII

VIOLA

IN spite of the fatigues and excitements of the American tour, the Lyceum company on its return to London, soon recommenced active work. After a brief revival of "Much Ado About Nothing," "Twelfth Night" was produced for the first time under the Irving management on the 8th of July, 1884. At the fall of the curtain when Mr. Irving stepped forward to make his usual first-night speech, it was evident that a portion of the audience was by no means satisfied with "Twelfth Night" in its new and elaborate dress. The actor's remarks were so loudly and vehemently interrupted that at length the observation was drawn from him: "I can't understand how a company of earnest comedians can



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "VIOLA" IN "TWELFTH NIGHT."



VIOLA

admirable actors, having these three cardinal virtues of actors—being sober, clean, and perfect—and having exercised their abilities on one of the most difficult of plays, can have given any cause for dissatisfaction.” This unwonted demonstration was set down to various causes. Some pretended that it was the effect of a stifling July night on the temper of the audience ; others held the opinion that “Twelfth Night” was ill-suited to the Lyceum method of mounting the plays of Shakespeare, while others insisted that Irving’s Malvolio was earnest where it should have been airy and fantastic, with the result that the piece lost much of its point and became painfully dull. Ellen Terry’s Viola called forth much praise and comparatively little blame. Mr. Clement Scott wrote that her Viola “is set in a most enchanting key. It is tender, human, graceful, consistently picturesque, and with humour as light as feather down. It will be reckoned amongst the very best performances of this clever

ELLEN TERRY

lady, and it grows upon the spectators the play proceeds. Few will forget the surprising effect Miss Terry made in her lines as that to Olivia when she unveils

‘ Excellently done, if God did it all.’

It was the very conceit of graceful pudence. Or again, that to Olivia :

‘ I see you what you are, you are too proud.
But if you were the devil you are fair.’

Every one of these delicate touches of humour the audience instantly appreciated. The duel with Sir Andrew was also admirably done, with its boyish petulance and obvious terror at the sight of the sword blade. In the hands of anyone but an artist how vulgar and commonplace such a scene may be made ! Here Miss Ellen Terry delighted everybody. It was an admirable blending of poetic fancy and forced humour. Of its grace and symmetry of design we need say nothing.” Miss Terry’s Viola so moved the imagination of Miss Marie Corelli that she

VIOLA

recourse to verse in order adequately to express her emotions, and contributed a sonnet to "Temple Bar," concluding with the following lines :

"A poet's smile
Hallows thine effort, and our souls rejoice
To hear the lovely music of thy voice,
Free from all drawling sound and accent vile ;
Great Shakespeare's self with eye and brow serene,
Might look on thee and say, '*Well done, sweet Queen.*'"

From these well-intentioned if ungraceful and uninspired lines let us turn to an interesting criticism in "The Saturday Review." After speaking very highly of the scenery, the critic continues: "The figures, however, who move in front of this setting, chosen and designed as it is with rare skill and taste, claim the first attention: and it is both natural and pleasant to begin with the one figure in the difficult presentation of which there is scarce a blemish to be detected. This, we need hardly say, is the Viola of Miss Ellen Terry, a Viola instinct with grace, modesty,

ELLEN TERRY

tenderness, and light and delicate humour. Nothing could be better than her bearing in her youth's disguise both to Orsino and to Olivia; nothing, as we think, better conceived, executed, and balanced than the delivery of the famous speech beginning with the words, 'A blank, my lord.' In the light passages which mask a deeper feeling there are touches which remind one of an actress who was full of charm and full of genius—Desclée: and the frankness of the final avowal of the love which has perforce been concealed could not be bettered in its complete feeling and becomingness. So also in the scenes with Olivia, and notably in the scene in which Olivia declares her love, she comes near perfection. The delivery of the lines:

'By innocence I swear, and by my youth,
I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,
And that no woman has; nor never none
Shall mistress of it be, save I alone.
And so adieu, good madam; never more
Will I my master's tears to you deplore,'

conveyed an exact sense of the half-tragic

VIOLA

situation, and yet gave exactly that touch of comedy which the scene demands, and in the conveyance of which Musset and the best of his interpreters have come nearest to the spirit and the fitting interpretation of Shakespeare's comedy. One fault only we have thus far to find with Miss Terry's rendering of the whole part. This is when Malvolio brings to Viola the ring with which Olivia has charged him, and which Olivia pretends that the supposed Cesario has left behind him. It is necessary to quote the beginning of Viola's speech when Malvolio has left her to illustrate our meaning :

' I left no ring with her ; what means this lady ?
Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her !
She made good view of me ; indeed so much
That, sure, methought, her eyes had lost her tongue,
For she did speak in starts distractedly.
She loves me, sure the cunning of the passion
Invites me in this churlish messenger.
None of my lord's ring ? why, he sent her none.
I am the man ; if it be so, as 'tis,
Poor lady, she were better love a dream.'

Here Miss Terry gives the words ' I am

the man' with an air of pretty and intense amusement, and follows them by a charming and laughing assumption of a mannish walk. That this is the right interpretation we cannot believe. Viola, light-hearted, and brave as she was in the midst of trouble, was not the person to be unfeeling towards the trouble of another woman. Amusement she may very naturally have felt at the mistake ; but it would not have been unmixed. There would have been some touch of pity and of interest, and of this Miss Terry gave no hint. But this is the one important blemish on a performance which came near to being ideal, and may no doubt come yet nearer when the nervousness inseparable from attacking so difficult a part has disappeared." In allowing for the effects of nervousness, the critic of "The Saturday Review" is only doing Miss Terry justice, for there is probably no actress in Europe of equal standing and experience who suffers on the first night of a new production more acutely than she

VIOLA

does. It is to be noted that the custom of doubling the parts of Viola and Sebastian which was followed by Miss Kate Terry and Miss Neilson was departed from by Ellen Terry, her brother, Mr. Fred Terry, playing Sebastian. His likeness to his sister, and the happy way in which he managed to reproduce her voice and manner made his performance one of curious interest. "Twelfth Night" was played for the last time at the Lyceum on the 22nd of August and was followed by performances of the principal plays in Irving's *répertoire* previous to a second American tour which commenced at the Opera House, Quebec, on the 30th of September, 1884, and concluded at the Star Theatre, New York, on the 4th of April in the following year.

CHAPTER XIII

MARGARET

THE Lyceum company opened the season of 1885 on the 2nd of May, when "Hamlet" was acted once more, and Mr. Irving and Miss Terry were received with frantic enthusiasm by their faithful admirers, the stage being literally bombarded with bouquets. On the 28th of the same month "Olivia" was performed for the first time at this theatre, Mr. Irving playing the part of Dr. Primrose with infinite dignity and pathos. "For seven years," wrote one of the critics, "the Olivia of Miss Ellen Terry has been laid up in lavender, and the picture of a loving and lovable woman, with all her waywardness, trust, disappointment and anguish, is presented to us, with an added sweetness and



Window and Grove, photo.]

SIR HENRY IRVING AND MISS ELLEN TERRY IN "OLIVIA."



MARGARET

a deepening colour. The artist evidently has not put this admirable study of a true woman wholly out of her mind. She has not played the part for a long time on the stage, but she must often have thought of it. New ideas, fresh suggestions, innumerable delicate touches, never lost on the observant spectator, have been brought to bear on the new Olivia, who stands out as one of the most striking personations—as fine in perspective as in outline, as tender in thought as it is true in sentiment—that the modern stage has seen." Everybody seemed to agree that in those acts in which force was required, notably the third and fourth, Miss Terry's Olivia had improved materially, while its grace and charm in the more tender and less exacting passages were as conspicuous as ever. It must, however, be confessed that on the vast stage of the Lyceum, Mr. Wills's play seemed small and somewhat tame, admirably acted and mounted though it was.

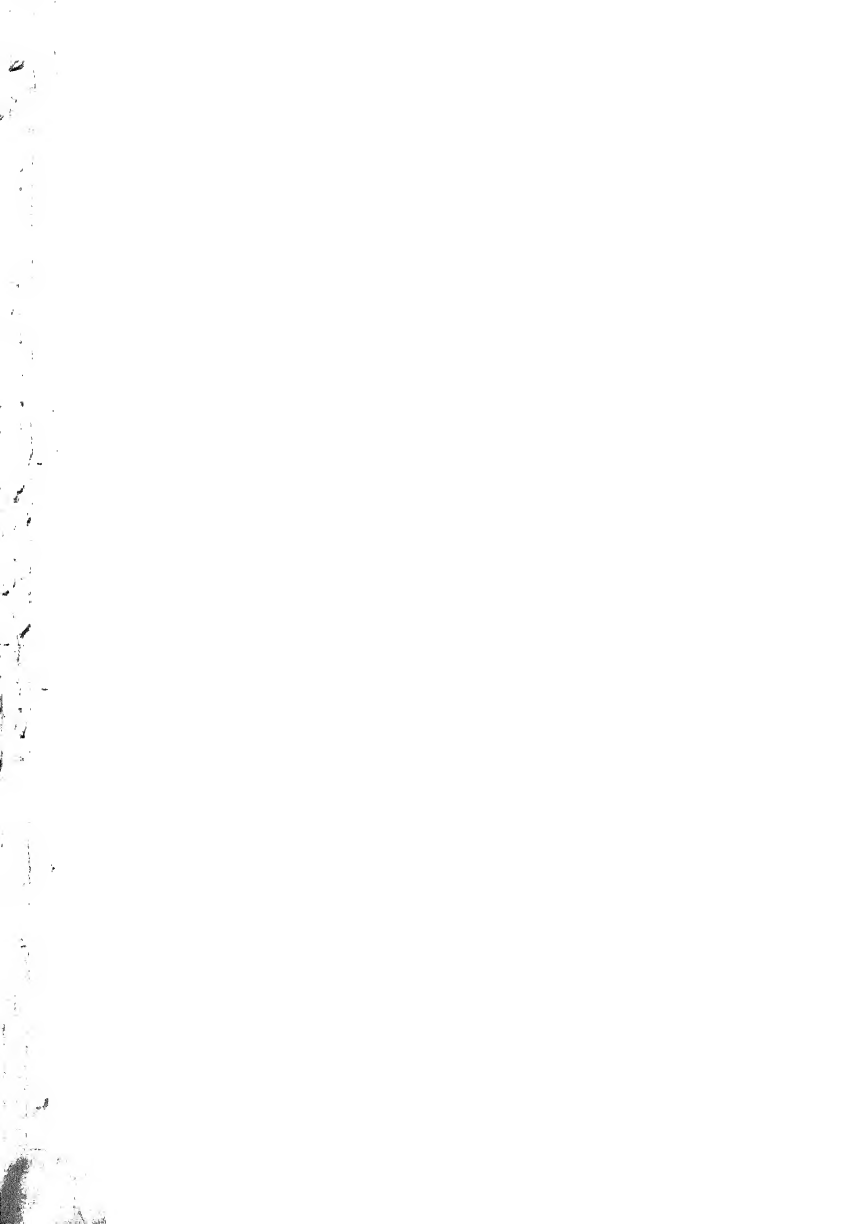
ELLEN TERRY

The great event of the year 1885 at the Lyceum Theatre was the production of "Faust" on the 19th of December. The work of producing a version of the First Part of Goethe's overwhelming drama was intrusted to Mr. W. G. Wills, who, in attempting such a task, gave signal proof of his valour if not of his discretion. "To represent the Faustus of Goethe," said Schlegel, "we must possess Faustus's magic staff, and his formula of conjuration"; in addition, the same critic observes that Goethe purposely outruns the "dimensions of the theatre in all directions." Looking to the fact that Mr. Wills was simply a fairly accomplished playwright without a magic wand, and that he was strictly limited to the conventional "three hours' traffic of the stage," he seems to me to have done his work as well as could be expected. Whether the effort should ever have been made is another question, and one which it is not necessary to answer here. The Lyceum version of "Faust"



Windsor and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "MARGARET" IN "FAUST."



MARGARET

served at least three purposes. In the first place, it delighted thousands of people by reason of the startling nature of its scenery and effects; secondly, it enabled people to see Mr. Irving, not merely as an everyday villain, but as the devil himself; and, thirdly, it gave Miss Terry the opportunity of an impersonation which largely increased her claim to be considered the most distinguished of living English actresses. Ellen Terry's Margaret was as rich in tenderness, as absolutely sweet in its perfect simplicity, as her Ophelia, but it exhibited qualities which the Ophelia, owing to the limitations of the part, of necessity lacked. Its intensity was deeper: there was a tragic ring about it which surprised many of those who held the opinion that the art of Ellen Terry began with grace and ended with grace. Mr. Knight was among the first to recognize the increased power which the actress displayed. "Miss Terry," he wrote, "is shown at her best, especially in the closing

ELLEN TERRY

scenes, the passion of which was in excess of anything she has exhibited. The picture in the opening in St. Lorenz-Platz was pretty ; that of the discovery of the jewels had much grace ; and the scene of the conquest of her affections, though not especially Teutonic, was at least winsome. In the closing act the aspect of the tearful face, the wandering uncertain light in the eye, and the maddened embrace in which she clasped her lover were finer than anything this versatile artist has shown." There were many other impressive moments besides those which Mr. Knight points out. To me, at least, the scene at the well, when Margaret is deserted by her companions and gives vent to her agony in a wild outburst of passionate grief, was the finest moment in the play. And again it is impossible to forget Miss Terry's delivery of the lines :

" To-morrow I must die,
And I must tell thee how to range the graves.
My mother the best place—next her my brother,



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "MARGARET" IN "FAUST."



MARGARET

Me well apart, but, dearest, not too far,
And by my side my little one shall lie."

The line "Me well apart, but, dearest, not too far," is one of the most telling, speaking from the actor's point of view, in the whole play, and the effect which Miss Terry gave to it by her infinitely pathetic delivery was astonishing. Altogether, Ellen Terry's Margaret was a triumph. It was the excuse for many pictures and more poems. Among the latter, one contributed to "Longman's Magazine" by Mr. Walter Herries Pollock contained the verses :

"Maid of 'haviour demure,
All that's sweet and all that's pure,
Girl awakening to love
As to message from above ;
Scarce aware that aught is evil,
Sainthood's horror of the devil,
Misery heaped on misery
When the fiend has conquered thee ;
Truth of spirit, truth of heart,
Overmastering Satan's Art ;
When the fatal sword should fall
True to heaven in spite of all ;
Joy made perfect in a sigh,
Sorrow's very ecstasy ;

ELLEN TERRY

Though the Poem's stress and storm
Reach us in an alien form,
Goethe's passion, Goethe's will,
Find we in thy Gretchen still."

During the long run of "Faust," Miss Terry found that the strain of playing Margaret every night was too great for her and after a time she was succeeded in the part by Miss Winifred Emery, who gave conclusive proof of the possession of those powers which have now won for her so conspicuous a place amongst the players of to-day.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE MINOR CHARACTERS

“THE BELLS” and “Raising the Wind”—both of them great favourites with Lyceum audiences—were revived on the 24th of July, 1886. In the latter little play, Ellen Terry appeared for the first time as Peggy, the part formerly acted by Miss Isabel Bateman. It goes without saying that this was not a very serious task for an actress who had recently triumphed as Margaret. It afforded Miss Terry the opportunity of wearing a picturesque and charming costume, and of course she wore it with characteristic grace. Her acting was marked by the ease and spontaneity which one always expects from her in such characters. “Faust” was revived again in

December, and in the following year, in the months of April and May, performances of "Jingle" and "The Bells," "The Merchant of Venice," and "Louis XI." were given. On the 1st of June, 1887, Lord Byron's "Werner," specially arranged for the stage in four acts by Mr. Frank Marshall, was produced and performed for the benefit of Dr. Westland Marston. Dr. Marston's services to the stage undoubtedly deserve substantial recognition. His play, "The Patrician's Daughter," was accepted by Macready, while Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean appeared in his romantic drama "Heart and the World" and "Stratfordmore." In a comedy from his pen, entitled "Borough Politics," Webster and Miss Glover played the most important parts, and "Philip of France" and "Pure Gold" were originally accepted by Phelps, but subsequently produced under other management. Miss Helen Faucit distinguished herself in "Madame de Meranie"; Charles Dillon took the principal character in a one



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "PEGGY" IN "RAISING THE WIND."



THREE MINOR CHARACTERS

act drama entitled, "The Favourite of Fortune"; while Miss Neilson played in 'A Hero of Romance' and "Life for Life." If none of these dramas have any chance of permanent remembrance, they are nearly all above the low average of the dramatic writing which prevailed at the time. "Werner" is an exceedingly dull play, and has been well described as "a poem without poetry, a drama that is not dramatic." Irving was probably induced to resuscitate it by the recollection of the great success which Macready and Phelps achieved in the title-part. Miss Terry, "for this occasion only"—to quote from the playbill—played Josephine, wife of Werner, and delivered Byron's turgid lines a great deal better than they deserved. Up to the production of "Werner," Miss Terry had not appeared on the stage as a gray-haired woman who was the mother of a grown-up son. She fulfilled the new conditions demanded of her with perfect dignity and tenderness, and although the

part of Josephine amounts practically to nothing, it was, to use the graceful phrase of Dr. Westland Marston, "made valuable by the assistance of such an actress." It may be noted that, although "Werner" was produced for only one special performance, it was mounted and rehearsed with minute care, and the scenery by Mr. Hawes Craven, and costumes from designs by Mr. Seymour Lucas, A.R.A., were quite worthy of the Lyceum tradition.

On the 7th of June, a week after the production of "Werner," Mr. Alfred C. Calmour's "Poetical Fancy in Three Acts," entitled "The Amber Heart," was produced for the first time. The cast is a sufficiently remarkable one to warrant its reproduction here in full: Silvio, Mr. H. Beerbohm Tree; Geoffry, Mr. Frank Tyars; Ranulf, Mr. Allen Beaumont; Sir Simon Gamba, Mr. H. Kemble; Coranto, Mr. E. S. Willard; Mirabelle, Miss Cissy Grahame; Cesta, Miss Helen Forsyth; Katrona, Miss Giffard; and



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "ELLALINE" IN "THE AMBER HEART."



THREE MINOR CHARACTERS

Ellaline, Miss Ellen Terry. The critic of "The Athenæum" was fairly satisfied with "The Amber Heart" and praised its interpretation highly. "The story," he wrote, "is pretty and fantastic, and forms an imaginative and fairly attractive play. It was admirably mounted, and was acted by Miss Terry as the heroine, Mr. Beerbohm Tree as the false lover, and Mr. E. S. Willard in excellent style. The picture presented by Miss Terry was delightful, and her acting had singular delicacy, refinement, and pathos, and no small measure of power." Mr. William Archer, writing in "The World," said: "The play is founded on a very thin Gilbert-cum-Musset idea. A poet, with an instinct for stage effect, might have made it interesting enough. As it was Miss Ellen Terry's acting transmuted many passages into poetry, thus confirming Lamb's observation that on the stage 'Banks and Lillo' can often be made as effective as Shakespeare. Miss Terry has perhaps done nothing more moving

ELLEN TERRY

than her soliloquy in the second act, and her performance throughout was instinct with grace and feeling." In the opinion of "The Times," "Ellaline is an admirable part for Miss Ellen Terry, who throws into it all her wonted grace and charm, lifting the spectator in spite of himself into a golden world where 'they fleet time carelessly.'" The critic of "The Daily News" remarked that "The Amber Heart" enabled "Miss Terry to exhibit some of the best qualities of her incomparable style." A writer in "The Theatre" goes so far as to say that "The Amber Heart" provided Ellen Terry with her greatest triumph. This is of course the language of gross exaggeration, but Miss Terry's Ellaline was very keenly appreciated, if we may judge from the following high-flown tribute: "One moment of silence, then the audience, recalling that Ellaline was Ellen Terry, shook the very walls of the Lyceum with their applause, recalling her four times. Never has Ellen

THREE MINOR CHARACTERS

Terry been greater than in this scene. Like a poor discarded flower that has been worn nearest the heart, her fragrance was increased by being crushed. The bow of grief seemed to pass over her soul, wringing from it a chord of deep pathos that vibrated through every heart, while tears, real tears, flowed from her eyes." At the conclusion of the performance, Mr. Irving made Miss Terry a present of the dramatic copyright of "The Amber Heart." Mr. Calmour's play was revived at the Lyceum on the 23rd of May, 1888, and had a short run. The cast was again a very strong one, Mr. George Alexander taking the place of Mr. Beerbohm Tree, and Mr. Hermann Vezin that of Mr. Willard. On the same evening "Robert Macaire" was revived with Irving in the principal part and Mr. Weedon Grossmith in that of Jacques Strop. Miss Terry did not appear in this piece, Clementine, her former *rôle*, being interpreted by Miss F. Harwood. Before we leave the minor parts

which Miss Terry has acted, it may be mentioned that on the 2nd of June, 1898, she played Jeanette in "The Lyons Mail."

CHAPTER XV

LADY MACBETH

PREVIOUS to the production of "Macbeth," on the 29th of December, 1888, a very lively discussion went on in the newspapers and elsewhere as to the real character of Lady Macbeth, for it was rightly surmised that Miss Terry's reading of the part would differ widely from that of any of her illustrious predecessors. A writer in the "St. James's Gazette" of the 29th of December, in an article entitled "The New Lady Macbeth," said :

"We have not been let into the secret—so soon to be revealed—of Miss Terry's conception of the character she is to impersonate, but we may venture to forecast that it will be something rather different from that of histrionic tradition. The con-

ELLEN TERRY

ventional Lady Macbeth is the realization of the *femme terrible*. Actresses who play in the "large" style are usually cast for this part. They are ladies of powerful physique who convey the impression, or try to convey it, of masculine strength, courage, and resolution. The stage Lady Macbeth has muscles of iron and nerves of steel. She is a woman to make men tremble, and to frighten the wits out of women and children. Dauntless and desperate and terrible, there is nothing feminine about her. The part is a study of crime and fury and inhuman daring. Even in the final scenes in which she appears, the actress seeks to convey the impression, not so much of the tragic Queen broken down by remorse, as of the criminal female lunatic haunted by visions of horrible and insane bloodshed. Such is the tradition which the superb genius of Mrs. Siddons—following in the footsteps of her predecessor, Mrs. Pritchard—has bequeathed; and which even actresses so imperfectly

LADY MACBETH

equipped as Mdme. Bernhardt have sought to carry on."

Mr. Comyns Carr, evidently in anticipation of the new impersonation, wrote a pamphlet which proved to be to some extent a forecast of Miss Terry's reading of the character. The point of view is set forth, though, of course, only half-seriously and with intentional exaggeration, by Thackeray in "The Adventures of Philip" in the sentences: "Lady Macbeth is supposed to have been a resolute woman; and great, tall, loud, hectoring females are set to represent the character. I say No! She was a weak woman. She began to walk in her sleep, and blab after one disagreeable little incident had occurred in her house." "The Pall Mall Gazette," immediately before the production of "Macbeth" at the Lyceum, published an amusing "interview with Mr. W. Shakespeare" on "The Macbeth Murder Case," in which, in answer to the question, "As to Lady Macbeth's personal appearance, Mr. Shakespeare, do

ELLEN TERRY

you agree with Mrs. Siddons in thinking of her as 'fair, feminine, even fragile'?", the poet is made to reply :

"I think of her as a handsome woman, no doubt, and 'feminine' most certainly. Semiramis and Messalina were intensely feminine. If you come to that, who was ever more feminine than Mrs. Siddons herself? All that about 'the distinction of sex being only external' is merely a piece of bookmaker's nonsense—for Boaden was little better. Not all the spirits of heaven could ever have unsexed that motherly creature, Sarah Kemble. As for the 'fragility,' Mrs. Siddons has herself confessed to me that she was betrayed into using that word by inapt—not to say inept—alliteration. A fragile Lady Macbeth may be conceivable, for genius can do anything—made Pritchard genteel and Garrick six feet high—but, other things being equal, I'd back a thirteen-stone woman against a seven-stone sylph in the part."

As may well be imagined, the effect of

LADY MACBETH

these prolonged discussions was to produce a state of eager expectancy in the minds of playgoers almost without parallel in the annals of the modern English stage. The first-night audience received the production from start to finish with absolute enthusiasm. The new Lady Macbeth was called and re-called time after time, and a speech was exacted from Mr. Irving in which he said: "Our dear friend Ellen Terry, in appearing as Lady Macbeth for the first time before a metropolitan audience, has undertaken, as you may suppose, a desperate task, but I think no true lover of art could have witnessed it without being deeply interested, and without a desire to witness it again." Needless to say that if much had been written about the new impersonation before it had been seen, a great deal more was written about it afterwards. As Ellen Terry's Lady Macbeth is inseparable from Irving's Macbeth, I shall quote at length the criticism in "The Daily Chronicle," in which both inter-

pretations are discussed lucidly and intelligently :

“ It must at once be said that Mr. Irving's Macbeth is much stronger physically, as well as mentally, than it was in 1875. The chieftain who, with stern visage, defiant bearing, and confident step, bids the weird sisters speak when with Banquo he first meets them on the heath, is no ordinary military commander whose thoughts have been wholly occupied with war. He has silently dreamed of succession to the throne—certainly not by fair means, since Malcolm and Donalbain, and perhaps others, hinder his grasp of the crown—and is momentarily taken off his guard when the three mysterious prophets greet him with titles that reach the full height of his ambition. He may or may not have been previously susceptible to supernatural influences, but the sudden declaration from a totally unexpected quarter of his secret hopes, though they do not unman him, shake his confidence in mortal ability to altogether conce



MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "LADY MACBETH."



LADY MACBETH

desperate and long-abiding resolves. For a moment he is suspicious of himself; if these seeming strangers can read his mind, may not those friends and companions who have fought by his side in many a fierce conflict with the enemy? If this be the case, he must as soon as possible carry his purpose to a conclusion, lest it be altogether frustrated. This is the feeling that stirs him when Banquo, perceiving his perturbation, asks :

‘ Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair.’

How can he be Thane of Cawdor when that title is held by another? Almost immediately afterwards he receives earnest of the truth of the witches’ words and henceforward resigns himself to fate. Occasionally he hesitates, because until he has begun to hunger to displace the royal master who has behaved so generously to him, Macbeth has been a noble, honest, and, perchance, kindly-disposed man. It is here that the

ELLEN TERRY

peculiar subtlety of Mr. Irving's embodiment is particularly manifest. Macbeth has to fight with himself, to beat down the opposition that springs from his better nature at the thought of becoming a vulgar assassin. He is no craven ; he is dismayed if not absolutely appalled, at the extent of his desires. His wife, to whom Macbeth is everything, knows what is in his heart and she is persuaded that he will remain moody and discontented until the throne is his. Love blinds her to all else but the fulfilment of his wishes, and thus she allies herself with the spirits of evil 'to prick the sides' of his intent and help him to happiness. This is the Lady Macbeth of Miss Ellen Terry, whose impersonation, both in imagination and in execution, is in such sympathy with the Macbeth of Mr. Irving that the two performances are inseparable. Without such an affectionate yet determined woman as Miss Terry makes Lady Macbeth, the newly-invested Thane of Cawdor as illustrated by Mr. Irving, would never

LADY MACBETH

have laid violent hands on Duncan. After being the confidant she becomes the guide, and urges him forward to ruin whilst she believes it will bring him peace. Thus much for the first act, in which on Saturday Mr. Irving indicated with many felicitous touches the brooding manner of the Thane and the power exercised over him by the unselfish affection—almost amounting to adoration—of his wife (exhibited by her steadfast gaze upon the portrait of her absent spouse carried in her bosom, after she has read the letter narrating his interview with the witches), whilst Miss Ellen Terry has rarely acted with such intensity. The views of their characters they had respectively adopted could not have been depicted more forcibly, more truthfully, or with nicer tact.

“The masterful spirit of Miss Ellen Terry’s Lady Macbeth when employed upon her husband’s advancement is still more noticeable in the second act. With her homely dress of sober hue, and with

ELLEN TERRY

bright auburn tresses that are sometime allowed to fall in two long plaits almost to her feet, the Lady Macbeth of Miss Terry has no outward resemblance to any other character she has played. The voice is the same, her movements are as eloquent as the words she has to speak, but all else is different. The new Lady Macbeth feels that her husband may fail at the very last, so she nerves herself to give him renewed courage. She is no longer passive, but active in the plot. He shall attain his object, or they will perish together. The hour for the success of their scheme is now or not at all. They have waited for it, and if they allow it to pass a similar opportunity may never return. She does not think that anything more than the removal of Duncan is necessary to secure her husband's triumph. Only when the deed is done and the guilty pair stand together, alarmed by the knocking at the gate, does Lady Macbeth resign the control of affairs. The weakness of her sex asserts itself when

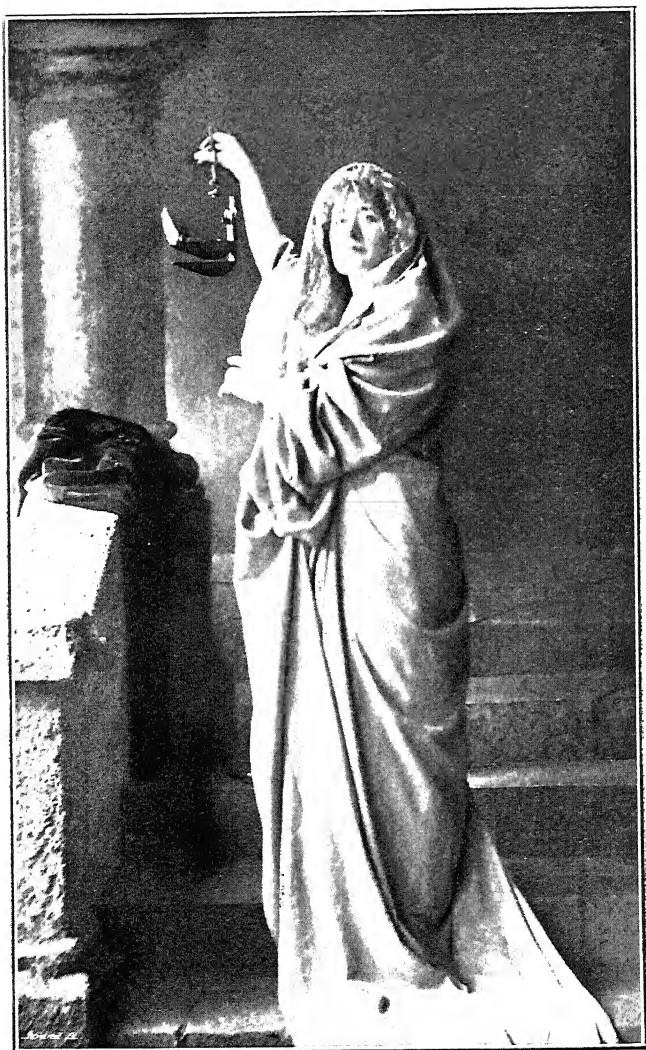
LADY MACBETH

agitated by the knowledge of the manner in which the murder has been committed, and in a measure terrified by the vehement grief and indignation of the suddenly-aroused inmates of the castle, she faints and is borne away. Excellent as it all is —provided we accept Miss Ellen Terry's reading of the character as the correct one —the chief triumph of the actress is, however, obtained in the somewhat subordinate scene between the husband and the wife, now respectively king and queen—feared by all, and loved by none — when they discover the sacrifice they have made to obtain power. With as much beauty of tone and of feeling as she speaks Ophelia's simile 'Sweet bells jangled; out of tune and harsh,' does Miss Terry deliver that most pathetic of laments:

'Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content:
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
Than, by destruction, dwell in doubtful joy.'

“ These lines have a wealth of meaning

as the confession of an overcharged soul as uttered on Saturday night, their poetic charm received the most exquisite interpretation. The strenuous endeavour of the Queen to cheer her husband even though her own heart is of the heaviness of stone, was marked by delicious tenderness and abnegation of self, qualities that were emphasised by the distressing weariness evinced by the Queen prior to Macbeth's appearance. Miss Terry indeed, does so well in this scene, that one wishes it could be prolonged. Being deprived of the means of showing Lady Macbeth's love for her husband, Miss Terry is not quite so successful as some of her predecessors in the somnambulic scene. That it is refined and eminently touching without saying, and by-and-by the actor may see her way to strengthen it without interfering with any feature of her personation that has gone before. The novelty, like the grace and power of the new Lady Macbeth, lies in the joy



Window and Grove, photo.]

LADY MACBETH

feels in her husband's presence, in the delight with which she hears him praised, and in her readiness to subordinate everything to his ambition. These and kindred emotions are portrayed in the most effective manner, and create a great impression even upon those who are by no means prepared to accept Macbeth's wife as a gentle, affectionate, and altogether fascinating, albeit resolute lady."

If the above was the most favourable of all the criticisms of Miss Terry's performance which appeared in the great London dailies, it is pleasant to remark that her impersonation of Lady Macbeth was discussed everywhere with perfect fairness and even with generosity. If her limitations were insisted on, her merits received a rich meed of praise. The critic of "The Morning Post," for instance wrote: "Even more difficult to deal with" (than Mr. Irving's Macbeth) "is the Lady Macbeth of Miss Ellen Terry. That it is convincing few will maintain. It is, however, divinely

ELLEN TERRY

beautiful. The woman who, in a quaint and indescribably beautiful costume, read by the light of the fire the letter of her husband, pausing to re-read the passages that most impressed or astonished her, and that then threw herself back in the long oaken chair to dream of the arrival and the fortunes of her king and lover, might have stood in the Court at Camelot, and gained the wondering homage and obeisance of Sir Galahad, as well as Sir Lancelot. Her long braids of burnished golden hair were fair as those into which Sabrina wove the lilies, and the light of her wish or her promise might have stirred to any action of nobility or seduced to any deed of crime or shame. No less wonderful was the creature who, with hair blanched with sorrow and eyes steeped in a slumber that was not rest, stood like a spirit at the foot of the stairs, as she came to visit the scenes of past suffering and crime, and sought in vain to cleanse her hands from the imaginary stain. A creature so spiritual,

LADY MACBETH

so ineffable, has never perhaps been put on the stage. Is this Lady Macbeth? Who shall decide? That it is not the Lady Macbeth of tradition or of Mrs. Siddons we know. It is scarcely a Lady Macbeth we realize. It is, perhaps, one of which we have dreamed. Shakespeare, at least, it may be said, would have hailed it with delight as revelation, if not as interpretation. In the great murder scene, very powerfully played, this was not the woman to fill Macbeth with her own resolution. It might, however, be the woman to madden him to things beyond his customary reach. Under such promptings, and for the beneficent promise of those eyes, what might not a man do? Here, again, we pause, and leave to the playgoer to decide. This is Miss Terry's Lady Macbeth. See, marvel at, admire, recall if you can, but see. This is what the world will do not once, but often."

Whatever the verdict of the critics of Ellen Terry's acting as the Thane's wife,

ELLEN TERRY

they were agreed that in the costumes which Mrs. Comyns Carr designed for her she looked more picturesque than even she had ever looked before. I have before me a reproduction of the wonderful portrait of her by Mr. Sargent (which, owing to the kindness of Sir Henry Irving, is included in these pages) and, by the side of it, a print of Westall's portrait of Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth. The latter represents a woman who is simply "fearsome," without a touch of dignity or beauty. That Mrs. Siddons, who inspired Sir Joshua and Gainsborough so happily, looked at all like the woman in this picture, I absolutely decline to believe. If she did, and was still able to impress her audiences, her genius, so far from being exaggerated, has been absurdly under-estimated. But we know that Mrs. Siddons was a magnificent woman and Westall a very mediocre painter so that there is little doubt that this pretended counterfeit presentment is scarcely better than a burlesque of the woman who

LADY MACBETH

sat to Reynolds for the Tragic Muse. But it may be doubted whether Mrs. Siddons herself looked more regal, and in certain moments more infamous than Ellen Terry, with blanched face and copper-coloured hair, clad in magnificent draperies which glowed with the metallic lustre of the wings of green beetles. Small wonder that she suggested to Mr. Sargent a portrait which is at once a likeness and a picture of strange and profound interest.

That Ellen Terry had a modest and reasonable idea of her achievement as Lady Macbeth may be judged from the following note to that veteran of veteran actresses, Mrs. Keeley, which, by the way, throws important light on Miss Terry's conception of the character :

“Why what a kind, nice, dear, little New Year's letter you have written about me, the last day of the poor old year! It is so sweet of you that I am compelled to write ‘thank you,’ and send ‘a good wish to you’

ELLEN TERRY

for the new year—‘I wish you your heart’s desire.’ I can’t play Lady Macbeth, of course, properly, but I do hope to play her much better than on Saturday before the next few hundred nights have passed. I have never had the passion of ambition, but watching my own mother, and some few friends of mine, all good women, I have wondered at the lengths to which ambition—generally for some son or husband—drove them, and long ago I concluded that the Thane of Cawdor’s wife was a much be-blackened person. She was pretty bad, I think, but by no means abnormally bad. What fogs! You seemed so splendidly well the other night, I envied you. Again, thank you, and farewell in every place. With much respect,

“Affectionately yours,

“ELLEN TERRY.”

“Macbeth” was withdrawn on the last night of the season, the 29th of June, 1889, after a run of a hundred and fifty seven

LADY MACBETH

performances. On the 25th of June, Irving and Ellen Terry gave a reading of the play at St. James's Hall. This they subsequently repeated at the chief provincial towns of England and Scotland.

CHAPTER XVI

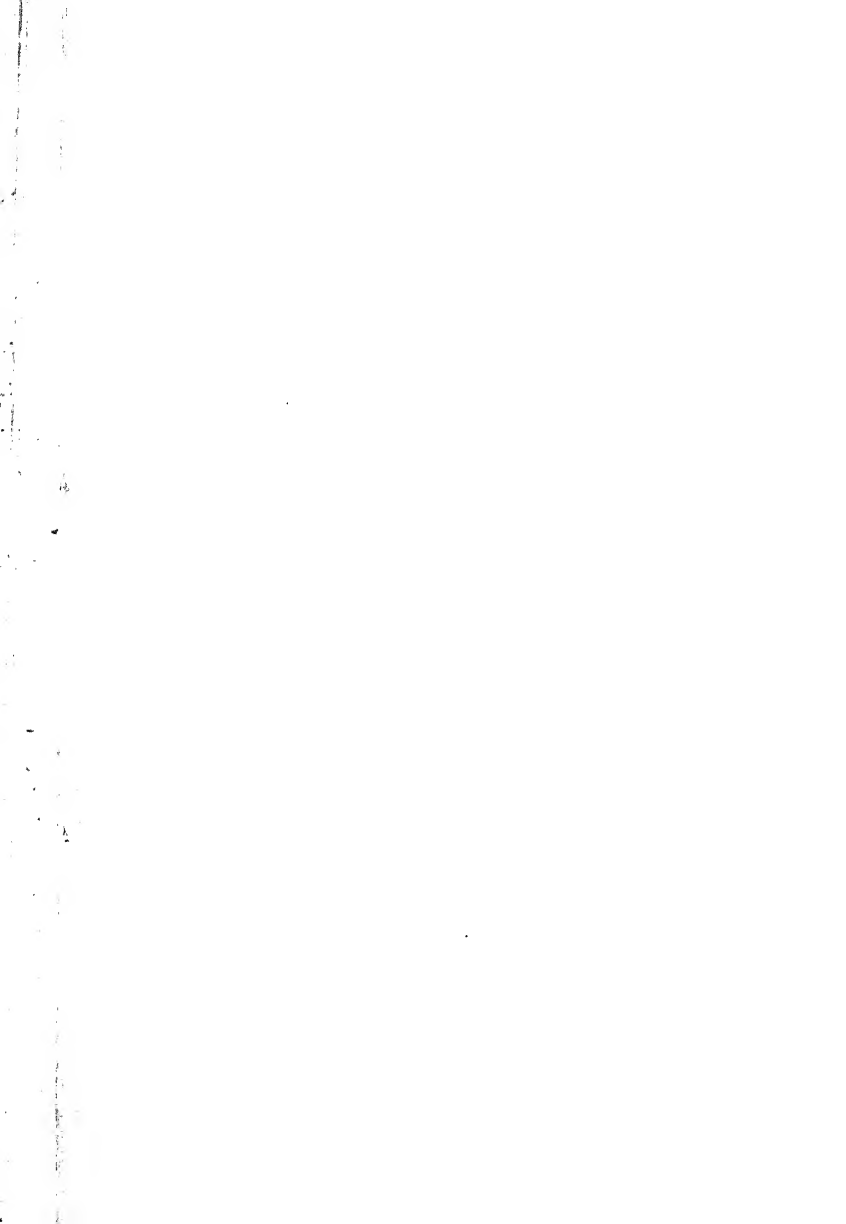
CATHERINE DUVAL AND LUCY ASHTON

IN the new production at the Lyceum which followed "Macbeth," Miss Terry exchanged the strange and fascinating costumes of the Thane of Cawdor's wife for the dainty flounced muslin and flower-covered silk which were affected by ladies a century and a quarter ago. On the 28th of September, 1889, Mr. Irving revived Watts Phillips's play "The Dead Heart." Probably he thought that he and his comrades had dwelt long enough on the heights of Shakespearean tragedy, and that, by way of a change, they would try the fierce delights of highly coloured melodrama of the old fashioned and unhesitating kind. Before "The Dead Heart" was presented to the fastidious audiences of the Lyceum, it went through



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AND MR. GORDON CRAIG IN "THE DEAD HEART."



CATHERINE DUVAL, ETC.

a process of revision at the hands of Mr. Walter Heries Pollock; M. Jacobi provided it with new and graceful music; Mr. Grego, Mr. Margetson, and Mrs. Comyns Carr designed charming dresses for it; while those scene-painters who have done so much for the Lyceum gave the play the advantage of an appropriate and beautiful setting. If it was worth while to drag "The Dead Heart" from its obscurity at all, it was no doubt wise to place it before the public with all these added attractions, for it can scarcely be considered a good play of its unambitious kind. Its success at the Adelphi in 1859 was doubtless due in no small measure to its admirable interpretation. Benjamin Webster was considered very impressive as Robert Landry, and was effectively supported by David Fisher, John Billington, J. L. Toole and Miss Woolgar. It may fairly be claimed that the company which took part in the Lyceum revival was as strong, if not stronger than this one. Irving was, of course, Robert

ELLEN TERRY

Landry; Mr. Bancroft played the Abbé Latour; while Mr. Haviland, Mr. Arthur Stirling, and Mr. Edward Righton filled the parts of the Count de St. Valery, Legrand and Toupet respectively. Mr. Gordon Craig as Arthur de St. Valery made his first appearance on the stage, and was welcomed by "The Daily Telegraph" in the following words: "Mr. Gordon Craig, who made his first appearance as the boy, Arthur, is a comely youth, the handsome son of a beautiful mother, whom he much resembles. It is but a small character, but the young actor made it stand out in intellect and picturesqueness." The comparatively unimportant parts of Cerisette and Rose were played by Miss Kate Phillips and Miss Coleridge, while Ellen Terry was Catherine Duval. In the first scene of the prologue Miss Terry realized to the full the light-hearted coquette who, in her deliciously artificial and dainty dress, looks as if she were created merely for frivolous days of mirth and dancing. Eighteen years

CATHERINE DUVAL, ETC.

elapse, and when next we see Catherine she has become the wife of Count de St. Valery and is a grey-haired mother, very sweet and still beautiful, whose life is bound up in that of her son. The play proper deals with the terrific days of the French Revolution and the first frenzied scene represents the taking of the Bastille. Slowly but inevitably Catherine's son falls into the clutches of the Revolution and is condemned to the guillotine. Very finely and with almost painful realism, did Miss Terry depict the agonized woman, crushed and broken with grief at the impending doom of her son, from which he is, however, saved by the sublime self-sacrifice of Landry who, at the last moment, takes the young Count's place and perishes in his stead. "The Dead Heart" has no claim to consideration either as literature or art, but it afforded not only Ellen Terry, but also Irving and Bancroft opportunities for fine acting of which they all three made the most.

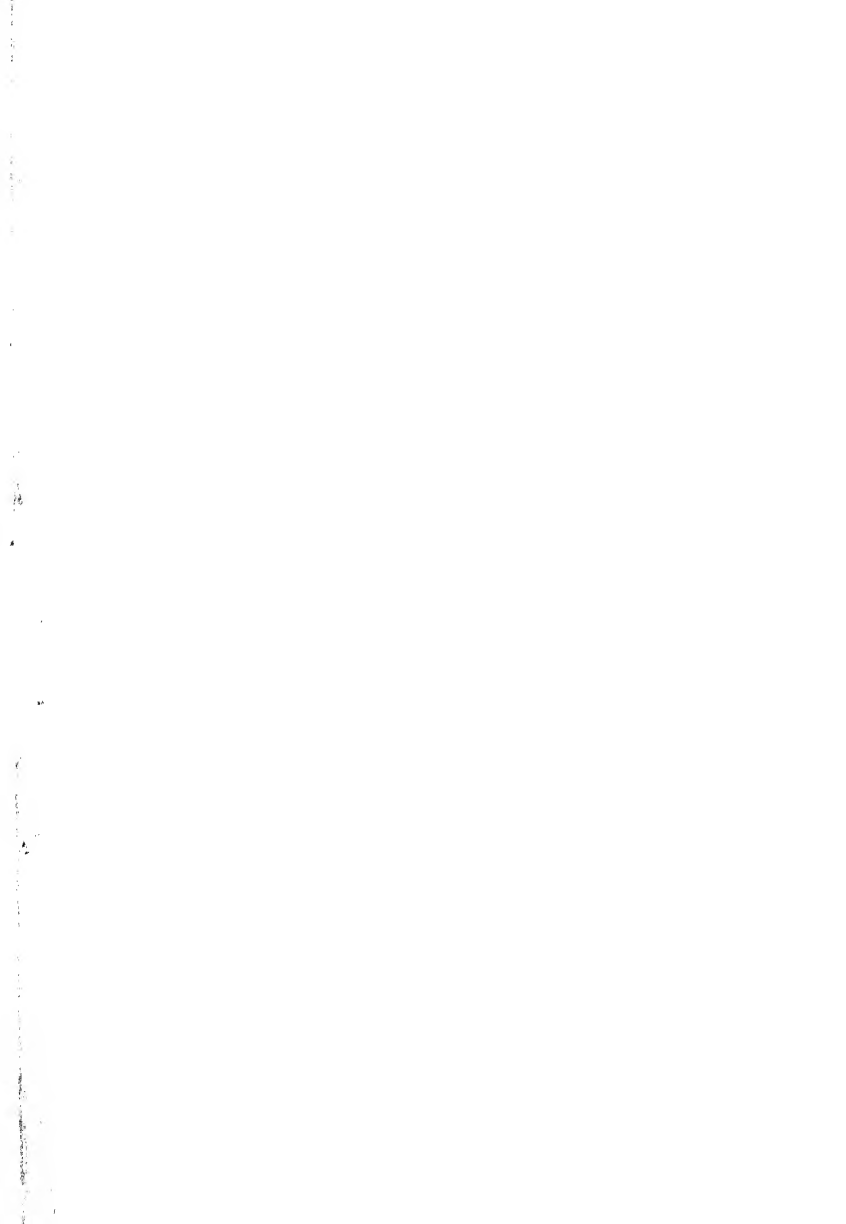
When it was known that Irving had

commissioned Mr. Herman Merivale
 write a play for him based on Scott's no-
 "The Bride of Lammermoor," expectati-
 were not unnaturally raised somewhat h-
 for Mr. Merivale was generally recogn-
 as a capable and versatile man of let-
 who had not altogether done justice to
 abilities. In his volume, "White Pilg-
 and other Poems," he showed that he
 far more than a merely facile versi-
 His novel, "Faucit of Balliol," was an-
 still eminently readable, while his
 pressive play, "Forget-me-not," ena-
 Miss Genevieve Ward conclusively
 prove herself a great actress. On
 20th of September, 1890, Mr. Meriv-
 adaptation of "The Bride of Lam-
 moor," entitled "Ravenswood," was
 length produced, but unhappily it was
 felt that it would add almost nothing to
 author's reputation. It conveyed
 nearly as little of the power and char-
 Scott's work as does the wearisome ope-
 version with which ambitious sopranos



Windows and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLIEN

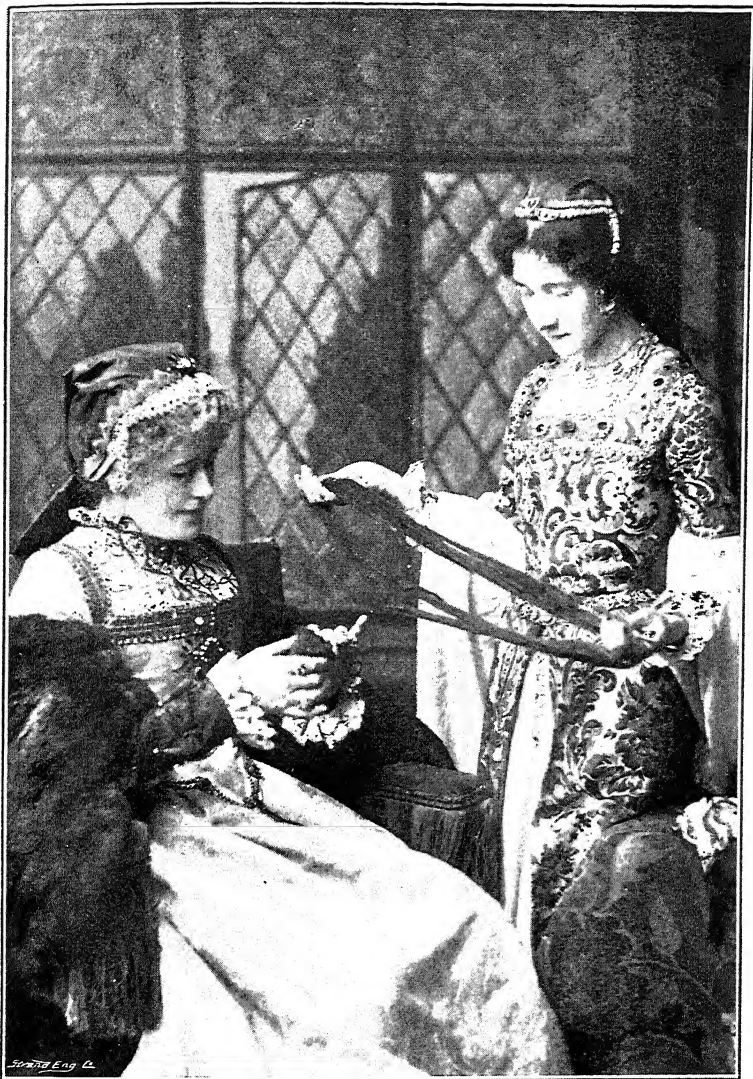


lackadaisical tenors have made us only too familiar. The magnificence of the staging of the play, so far from lending it assistance, served actually to emphasize its inherent weakness, even as the few fine lines of blank-verse which were scattered about the piece called attention to the low average of the writing of the whole play. As Lucy Ashton, Ellen Terry, in the opening scenes, had practically nothing to do, and throughout the entire drama the material upon which she had to work was of the flimsiest description. The author left the part of Lucy Ashton in outline, and in outline which was vague, shadowy, indefinite. Once and only once did Miss Terry have anything like a chance of producing a great effect. This was in the scene at the Mermaid's Well in which she played most touchingly and charmingly. That she did not do more was not her fault but that of the playwright.

CHAPTER XVII

QUEEN KATHERINE AND CORDE

It will hardly be maintained that the Famous History of the Life of Henry the Eighth," whether it was by Shakespeare alone, or by Shakespeare and Fletcher, or by Massinger, is an acting play. The real hero, Wolsey, and the real heroine, Katherine, die too early, and the conclusion is lame and ineffective. A series of historical tableaux with occasional dramatic incidents, rather than an acting drama that "Henry VIII." is treated if it is to find favour in the modern playgoers. Frankly recognizing this, Irving determined to revive it with the utmost magnificence, and



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AND MISS AILSA CRAIG IN "HENRY VIII."

QUEEN KATHERINE, CORDELIA

exceeded the notable revival by Charles Kean in 1855 and the more recent one at Manchester by Charles Calvert. Historical accuracy could not be taken further than it was in the Lyceum production of the 5th of January, 1892. Every shoe, every banner, every mitre, every processional cross was the object of minute care, with the result that most admirably vivid pictures were given of English Court life under the Princes of the house of Tudor. Very striking indeed was the superb physical realization of the three principal characters of the play. Mr. Terriss, as the King, was a Holbein come to life,—grand in face and figure, grand in costume, grand in manner. If Henry VIII. were such a man, no wonder Nicolo Sagudino, secretary to the Venetian embassy, declared that "His majesty is the handsomest potentate I ever set eyes on," no wonder he was preferred even to Francis I. the most august of the kings of France. As Mr. Terriss wore costume after costume, each grander than the last, one felt that

ELLEN TERRY

silk and velvet, feathers and lace, gold and precious stones, must have been specially created for the adornment of this most imperial personage. But if the king deserved the adjective magnificent, it was deserved in a far more subtle sense by the Cardinal, as embodied by Mr. Irving. His austere, ascetic face, his tall, stooping figure, were admirably suited to the part. The Cardinal's robe of rose-pink was splendidly simple by the side of the multi-coloured costumes of the king. As Queen Katherine, Miss Terry reminded me of one of those portraits of patrician ladies which Rembrandt painted in his earlier and more minute manner. In one scene she looked "a very queen of earthly queens" in a superb dress of purple,—the exquisite purple of the field orchis,—adorned with fur and jewels. Queen Katherine was one of the favourite parts of Mrs. Siddons. Mrs. Charles Kean played it with considerable success, and Miss Genevieve Ward in our own day has distinguished herself in it.

QUEEN KATHERINE, CORDELIA

It may safely be asserted that Miss Terry's reading of the part differed widely from that of any of her predecessors. Queen Katherine, as interpreted by Miss Terry, was first of all a woman infinitely tender, infinitely lovable. It is open to doubt whether Miss Terry did not go further in this direction than the author or authors of the play intended, whether she was not a trifle too winning, too graceful, too obviously attractive. She certainly gave no hint of the matron of twenty years' standing, but on the other hand was the lily that "was mistress of the field and flourished." In the trial scene Miss Terry gave a representation of dignity and of fiery scorn which must have surprised those critics who are inclined to admit that she is a great actress only within narrow limits. She bore herself throughout as a queen, and the proud daughter of a Spanish king, and when she swept out of the presence of her royal husband and the enthroned cardinals with the words:

ELLEN TERRY

"I will not tarry ; no, nor ever more,
Upon this business, my appearance make
In any of their courts—"

one felt that this high-spirited lady was a match for her judges. In the death-scene at Kimbolton, the actress has very small opportunity ; one's attention is of necessity concentrated on the vision with its "sacred personages, solemnly tripping one after another, clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays, and golden vizards on their faces ; branches of bays and palm in their hands." These stage directions were no doubt followed as intelligently as possible at the Lyceum, but nevertheless the dramatic value of the scene was inevitably destroyed, and one's thoughts were not with the dying Katherine but with the mechanical contrivances and the means of which the vision was produced. The Queen Katherine of Ellen Terry, it was not one of her most memorable impersonations, at least showed us what was to some extent a new aspect of her art.

QUEEN KATHERINE, CORDELIA

Some ten months after the revival of "Henry VIII.," Irving produced "King Lear," for the first time at the Lyceum Theatre, on the 10th of November, 1892. The Queen Katherine of the first play was the Cordelia of the second, and assuredly no two heroines of the Shakespearean drama have less in common than these. Miss Kate Terry, as we have already seen, played Cordelia at the outset of her career, before, indeed, she had reached womanhood. Her sister Ellen acted the part for the first time after she had triumphed as Ophelia, Portia, Beatrice, Desdemona, Viola, and Lady Macbeth, and was, in fact, the most popular actress of her time. Cordelia is a famous and undoubtedly a very beautiful part, but it is at the same time a comparatively unimportant one. "It appears," as Mrs. Jameson admits, "to have no surface, no salient points upon which the fancy can readily seize: there is little external development of intellect, less of passion, and still less of

ELLEN TERRY

imagination." Notwithstanding the scantiness of the materials, Ellen Terry made Cordelia a study which we shall not readily forget. Her impersonation was not merely a feature of the Lyceum production, it was *the* feature, so far as the acting of the play went. "Without such an ideal Cordelia was found last night in Miss Ellen Terry," wrote Mr. Clement Scott, "such a Lear (as that of Mr. Irving) might have been considered a rash and hazardous experiment. But the artist knew where he had posted his reserves. He was perfectly well aware from whom would come the relief, and it came certainly and surely when the distraught king found his pathetic solace in the arms of the daughter he had wounded and impetuously misunderstood. The play woke up and gained new life when Cordelia was discovered, and her great love tempered the anguish of the uncrowned king. Seldom has Miss Ellen Terry, in recent years, risen to the occasion. Cordelia is not, altogether, a very telling character : but the act



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "CORDELIA" IN "KING LEAR."



QUEEN KATHERINE, CORDELIA

did wonders with it. She illuminated the play. Whether arrayed in pale blue or virgin white, she seemed to have cast away ten or fifteen years of anxious and harassing life. She looked as young as when she played Beatrice, and in every scene and situation she seconded the desire of Henry Irving to bring out the intensely affectionate nature of this tremendous father." Miss Terry was seen to most advantage in the later scenes, when Lear, reconciled to his best loved child, is simply a "foolish, fond old man." Her performance in this part of the tragedy was the most agreeable incident of a revival which called forth respect rather than enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XVIII

FAIR ROSAMUND AND GUINEVERE

As we have already seen, communications passed between Irving and the late Poet Laureate with a view to the production of "Becket" about the year 1879. Twelve years later the manager of the Lyceum determined to mount the play, and, having of course obtained the permission of the author, it was performed for the first time on the 6th of February, 1893. Its success was instantaneous and unequivocal, and Irving, in all his long and brilliant career, has done nothing finer than his masterly impersonation of the great statesman-priest who is the central and commanding figure of the drama. Tennyson died on October the 6th, 1892, without having the gratifica-



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "FAIR ROSAMUND" IN "BECKET."



FAIR ROSAMUND, GUINEVERE

tion of knowing of the triumph of "Becket." In the course of the first run of the piece, Irving wrote to the present Lord Tennyson: "We have passed the fiftieth performance of 'Becket,' which is in the heyday of its success. I think that I may, without hereafter being credited with any inferior motive, give again the opinion which I previously expressed to your loved and honoured father. To me 'Becket' is a very noble play, with something of that lofty feeling and that far-reaching influence which belong to a passion play. There are in it moments of passion and pathos which are the aim and end of dramatic art, and which, when they exist, atone to an audience for the endurance of long acts. . . . I know that such a play has an ennobling influence on both the audience who see it and the actors who play it." Unfortunately for Miss Terry, the part which she had to play in "Becket" had been, to use the expressive and emphatic phrase of one of the critics, "dragged in by the hair." As Mr. William

ELLEN TERRY

Archer has pointed out, the poet did attempt to interweave the stories of Becket and Fair Rosamund; he was content simply to jumble them together. "In a drama intended for the study," said Mr. Archer, "there is no need to 'work the female interest;' that is one of the 'exigencies of the theatre.' There was ample material for fine play in the history and character of Archbishop alone. The Rosamund episode has, in reality, nothing to do with the main theme, and is as improbable as it is untimely." Mr. Archer, I think, very fairly dismisses Miss Terry's share in "Becket" by saying that "she is graceful, tender, altogether charming as Rosamund, but her character seems to me so futile and out of place, that the greatest actress in the world would scarcely bring it home to my sympathies." Everybody will acquiesce in Hallam Lord Tennyson's statement that the part of Rosamund was "most triumphantly rendered by Ellen Terry," but it can be regretted that Rosamund is so dis-



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "NANCE OLDFIELD."



FAIR ROSAMUND, GUINEVERE

nected with the real story of the drama as to excite relatively small interest.

On the 20th of July, Miss Terry appeared once more in the little piece by Charles Reade entitled "Nance Oldfield," which, by her impersonation of the title part, she has rendered so popular that it is constantly revived and as constantly meets with approval. This unimportant trifle affords her the opportunity of being very feminine and very charming, and therefore serves its turn well enough. On the 5th of June, 1894, at an afternoon performance at Daly's Theatre, a "proverb" in one act by "John Oliver Hobbes" and George Moore, entitled "Journeys End in Lovers Meeting," was produced for the first time. The three parts were played by Mr. Forbes-Robertson, Mr. Terriss, and Miss Terry. In "The Theatrical World of 1894," Mr. Archer wrote of the production: "I should like to interview 'John Oliver Hobbes' and Mr. George Moore upon their comedita produced at Daly's Theatre. I should

ELLEN TERRY

begin by complimenting them warmly and sincerely upon a clever piece of work, a valuable addition to our stock of agreeable curtain raisers. Then I should ask them (of course in polite periphrasis) why they did not make it just a little better while they were about it? Why they did not treat it either quite seriously or quite fantastically? . . . Then, taking for granted their appreciation of the service rendered them by Miss Ellen Terry's brilliant beauty and winning vivacity, I should inquire, with all possible delicacy, whether her treatment of the part entirely answered to their intentions? Whether there was not, perhaps, too much youth and freshness in her manner, too little polish and subtlety in her diction? Whether any modern woman is quite so exuberantly youthful, quite so eager and emphatic, as Miss Terry's Lady Soupise?" To these questions the authors of "Journeys End in Lovers Meeting" have, so far as I am aware, not yet replied, but if the modern world does not contain

FAIR ROSAMUND, GUINEVERE

such delightful women as Miss Terry's Lady Soupise, it is a fact much to be deplored.

On the 12th of January, 1895, Mr. Comyns Carr's drama, "King Arthur," was produced. Writing in "The Daily Telegraph," Mr. Clement Scott characteristically prefaces his criticism as follows: "At last 'King Arthur' is to be acted at the Lyceum; at last Henry Irving is to be the 'half-divine' ruler and founder of the Table Round! At last Ellen Terry is to be the Queen Guinevere we have pictured in our imaginations these countless years. Herman Merivale was to have done a version of the Arthurian legend—Merivale, the poet-dramatist; it was to have been written also by W. G. Wills, the most imaginative stage writer of our time. Everyone known and unknown had a dreamy, undetermined view of how 'King Arthur' ought to be done. The poets and the sentimentalists and the æsthetes pestered poor Mr. Irving with their ideas on 'King

ELLEN TERRY

Arthur.' " No living English dramatic critic differs more radically or more frequently from the opinions of Mr. Scott than Mr. Archer, but both were agreed as to the success of "King Arthur." Writing in "The World," of which his criticisms are an extremely important and interesting feature, Mr. Archer says: "A splendid pageant and a well-built folk-play (for why should we leave to the Germans such a convenient word as *Volkstück*?)—these are the ingredients of the dish served up at the Lyceum and hugely relished by the audience. 'King Arthur' is a genuine success, of that there is no doubt; and it deserves its fortune. In producing such a work, Mr. Irving is putting his opportunities and resources to a worthy use. In the historic or legendary pageant-play he seems to have found the formula best suited to the present stage of his career. On this path, at any rate, he marches from success to success—from 'Henry VIII.' to 'Becket,' from 'Becket'



Windsor and Grove, photo.]

FAIR ROSAMUND, GUINEVERE

to 'King Arthur.' Mr. Comyns Carr, it is true, is neither Shakespeare-Fletcher nor Tennyson. We miss not only the distinction of style, but the large dramatic movement which even Tennyson succeeded in imparting to one or two of his scenes. On the other hand, Mr. Carr writes very creditable blank verses, correct, and by no means lacking in dignified sonority ; and he knows how to put a play together much better than Tennyson ever did, or than Shakespeare cared to in 'Henry VIII.'" Of Ellen Terry's Guinevere, Mr. Archer contents himself by saying that "Miss Ellen Terry is an ideal Guinevere to the eye ; it is impossible to conceive a statelier or more gracious figure ; and her performance is altogether charming." Mr. Scott, after insisting on "the gentle and graceful touches of womanhood shown by Miss Ellen Terry, a picture in many a lovely scene," goes on to say : "If the note of passion was sometimes thin and faint ; if the fierce fire of love burned a little low, still

ELLEN TERRY

the accent of gentleness and tenderness was as true as ever." It should be remarked that these criticisms were written after the first performance, an ordeal out of which Ellen Terry, like many other acutely sensitive artists, sometimes comes by no means successfully. Her Guinevere grew in force and intensity as "King Arthur" proceeded on its successful career.



Window and Grove, photo.]

CHAPTER XIX

IMOGEN

A GREAT deal of interest was aroused when it was announced that Ellen Terry was to play the part of Imogen in "Cymbeline" on the 22nd of September, 1896, for it was felt that the actress would have an opportunity worthy of herself, and one of which she was peculiarly fitted to make the most. According to one of the lady commentators on Shakespeare's female characters: "there is no female portrait that can be compared to Imogen as a woman—none in which so great a variety of tints are mingled together into such perfect harmony. In her, we have all the fervour of youthful tenderness, all the romance of youthful fancy, all the enchantment of ideal grace—the bloom of beauty,

ELLEN TERRY

the brightness of intellect, and the dignity of rank, taking a peculiar hue from the conjugal character which is shed over all, like a consecration and a holy charm." In the character thus described with considerable justice, if in style somewhat old-fashioned Ellen Terry achieved a magnificent success. The critics spoke almost as one man; the new school and the old joined in a chorus of congratulation. Writing in "The Star" Mr. A. B. Walkley (whose volume "Playhouse Impressions" proves conclusively his delightful originality and his rare gift of critical analysis) tells us that Miss Ellen Terry's Imogen will "rank amongst her first-rate achievements. Sweet and tender, the soul of trust and innocence, full of girlish spirits in the few moments when cruel fate ceases to vex her, piteous beyond measure in her grief, radiant in her joy—here is a figure that dwells in the memory as one of absolute beauty. Of course we must refer unto Shakespeare the things which are Shakespeare's; Imogen is so lovely a cha-

IMOGEN

acter that it would take a deal of incompetent acting to spoil. But Miss Terry interprets beauty beautifully, and that is the long and the short of it." Coming from Mr. Walkley this is praise indeed, for he is by no means lavish of laudatory adjectives, and his approval is generally so nicely qualified that it loses a considerable measure of its sweetness. The account of Miss Terry's impersonation given in "The Times" of the 23rd of September, 1896, is very interesting by reason of its retrospective character: "Of the representatives of Imogen there have been no lack, those of the very first rank being, as we have said, Mrs. Siddons and Miss Helen Faucit. To this small number we must now add Miss Ellen Terry, who with her airy grace and tender womanliness is Imogen to the life. Upon the character of Imogen the commentators have exhausted their vocabulary of praise. She is 'the purest and most womanly of all Shakespeare's heroines'; she 'sheds warmth,

ELLEN TERRY

fragrance and brightness over the whole drama, blending exterior grace with moral beauty'; she has 'simple piety, wifely devotion, instinctive, unobtrusive modesty, gentle courtesy, moral heroism' combined, as Professor Morley points out, with 'physical cowardice' as a womanly virtue, and this robust writer does not fail to credit her even with aptitude in cookery. To some actresses, doubtless, the task of wearing a page's dress is rather trying. It was probably so to Mrs. Siddons who appealed to an artist friend for a 'slight sketch of a boy's dress to conceal the figure as much as possible.' The donning of doublet and hose by the heroine was a favourite effect of the stage of Shakespeare's day, as Juliet, Portia, Jessica, Rosalind, and Imogen testify; it was suggested, no doubt, by the custom of boys acting the female part. In being, like Rosalind, 'uncommon tall,' Miss Ellen Terry carries off this part of her performance, too, in exquisite style. Above all, however, it is in the true



Windsor and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "IMOGEN."



IMOGEN

womanliness of Imogen that the actress excels, and here voice, manner, looks, and temperament combine to help her. Ravishingly sweet is her slowness to think ill of Posthumus, even when he seems to have 'forgotten Britain' and been captivated by some 'painted jay of Italy'; equally so is her readiness to believe good of every body, even the tempter Iachimo; while the artlessness and unostentatiousness of Imogen's character are at every turn fully suggested. For Miss Ellen Terry, indeed, this production of 'Cymbeline' is a triumph." "The Daily Chronicle" was as enthusiastic as any of its contemporaries, and after speaking in the warmest manner of Miss Terry's acting throughout the play, concludes its criticism of her Imogen: "But the scenes in which the fascination of the actress is most potent are those in which Imogen is disguised as a stripling. Here the most engaging diffidence is allied to the gentleness and innocence which Miss Terry with such success

accentuates in the earlier scenes of the play." According to "The Daily News" "To Miss Ellen Terry fell the honour of the first tumultuous welcome. . . . Henceforth the successive appearances of Imogen were for Miss Ellen Terry, a series of triumphs. And again: "The triumph of last night, however, was that of Miss Ellen Terry, who has never played any part with more touching pathos, or at certain moments with a nearer approach to tragic power, finely contrasting with the joyousness with which she had hailed the prospect of rejoining her banished husband." Imogen is the most recent of Shakespeare's heroines to be played by Ellen Terry. It must be entirely agreeable to her to feel that it is amongst the most brilliant and most widely appreciated of her impersonations.



Window and Grove, photo.]

... THE ... "MADAME SANS GÊNE"



CHAPTER XX

MADAME SANS-GÊNE AND OTHER RECENT PARTS

OWING rather to the brilliant acting of Madame Réjane than to any intrinsic merit of its own, "Madame Sans-Gêne," a comedy in a prologue and three acts by Victorien Sardou and Emile Moreau, achieved a startling measure of success immediately on its first production in Paris. When Madame Réjane played the piece in London, with her own company, her delightful impersonation of the principal character was welcomed almost as enthusiastically as it had been in the French metropolis. It was inevitable, sooner or later, that "Madame Sans-Gêne" should be adapted for the English stage, and little surprise was felt when it was found that Sir Henry Irving

ELLEN TERRY

had secured the English rights in the play, and had commissioned Mr. Comyns Carr to translate it for the Lyceum Theatre. It may be inferred that "Madame Sans-Gêne" was produced mainly for the benefit of Ellen Terry, as the character of Napoleon cannot have held out much attraction to such an actor as Sir Henry Irving. Mr. Carr's version was presented on the 10th of April, 1897, with a completeness in the matter of scenery and costumes which, if possible, exceeded that of the French production itself. It would be very easy to institute a comparison between Miss Terry's rendering of the part of Madame Sans-Gêne and that of Madame Réjane, but it is not necessary to do so here. Each in its own way was delightful, and if Miss Terry's performance did not make us forget that of the Parisian actress who "created" the part, it was nevertheless both charming and picturesque. In one thing Miss Terry was not altogether a success. It is the business of Catherine at times to be clumsy and ungraceful, and



Window and Grove, photo.]

MADAME SANS-GÊNE, ETC.

to find the wearing of magnificent dresses a matter of no small difficulty. In spite of heroic attempts to be awkward, Ellen Terry's native grace asserted itself, with the result that the awkwardness was quite obviously make believe. Whether in the laundry in a costume bewitchingly coquetish by reason of its simplicity, or in the splendid robes which she wore in the salon of the Palace at Compiègne, Miss Terry looked as fascinating as is her wont. The Lyceum production drew all the town, and in the provinces it has become one of the favourite items of Sir Henry Irving's *répertoire*.

An event altogether more interesting than the performance of a translation of "Madame Sans-Gêne," was the production of a new drama, entitled "Peter the Great," on the 1st of January last, by Mr. Laurence Irving. The work of this young playwright was not entirely unknown to the stage: "Godffoi and Yolande," which Miss Terry enthusiastically describes as a "great

ELLEN TERRY

little play," was in existence to prove that Mr. Laurence Irving possessed a literary gift of a distinctly original kind. "Peter the Great," nevertheless, came as an impressive surprise. It would be by no means difficult to enumerate the defects of this remarkable effort. In places it was conspicuously crude, and betrayed the fact that Mr. Irving's hand had not altogether gained its cunning; but to compensate for this it possessed marked individuality, and was most promisingly unconventional. That it failed to draw large audiences for any considerable length of time was due more to the extremely painful nature of its subject-matter than to any inherent defect in the work itself. A minority of playgoers can endure to have their feelings harrowed to any extent; but for the majority there is a limit beyond which, apparently, it is unsafe for the dramatist, and especially for the dramatist of small experience, to go. There were not many bright touches to relieve the gloom of "Peter the Great," for Mr

MADAME SANS-GÊNE, ETC.

Laurence Irving showed an altogether praiseworthy determination to abstain from the introduction of irrelevant material for the purpose of lessening the strain and stress of his tragic play. The part of the Empress Catherine was relatively an unimportant one, and gave Miss Terry very little chance of displaying her skill. It goes without saying that she made the most of the opportunities which were afforded her. It was her misfortune, and not her fault, that her performance will not take an important place among the impersonations by which she will be remembered by generations of playgoers who will never see her.

If Miss Terry had little to do in Mr. Laurence Irving's "Peter the Great," she had still less in "The Medicine Man," by H. D. Traill and Robert Hitchens, which was produced on the 4th of May last. Any actress of ordinary intelligence and experience could have done all that was necessary in the part of Sylvia Wynford, and for this reason Ellen Terry was

wasted in it. Her performance will be forgotten as easily as the play itself, and all that need be said here is that she did what she could to secure the success of a piece which was foredoomed to failure.



Window and Grove, photo.]

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS "SYLVIA WYNFORD" IN
"THE MEDICINE MAN."

CHAPTER XXI

ELLEN TERRY IN AMERICA

ON the 11th of October, 1883, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry left Liverpool for the first time for New York by the White Star liner "Britannic," and arrived at the latter city ten days after. They set out on their first tour of the United States with the full knowledge that their success or failure would be of immense consequence to their future careers. Their triumphs in England had been proclaimed so loudly and insistently throughout America that the expectations of playgoers ran very high, and the English artists knew that the ordeal through which they were about to pass would be a severe one. They knew also that the prestige which they had gained in England would count for little in the States,

ELLEN TERRY

that they would be judged by American audiences simply on their merits, without reference to verdicts already pronounced in their favour by other tribunals. When the "Britannic" arrived at New York a host of distinguished people and a small army of reporters were there to greet the new arrivals. The gentlemen of the press were extremely personal, but they were at the same time very good-natured. Here is the picture of Miss Terry as drawn by the reporter of "The New York Tribune"

"As she stepped with a pretty shudder over the swaying plank upon the yacht she showed herself possessed of a marked individuality. Her dress consisted of a dark greenish-brown cloth wrap, lined inside with a peculiar shade of red; the inner dress, girt at the waist with a red, loosely folded sash, seemed a reminiscence of some eighteenth century portrait, while the delicate complexion caught a rosy reflection from the loose flame-coloured red scarf tied in a bow at the neck. The face itself is a

IN AMERICA

peculiar one. Though not by ordinary canons beautiful, it is nevertheless one to be remembered, and seems to have been modelled on that of some pre-Raphaelitish saint,—an effect heightened by the aureole of soft golden hair escaping from under the plain brown straw and brown velvet hat.” The following extract from an interview with Miss Terry immediately after her arrival is of more than passing interest: “Do you consider ‘Charles I.’ will present you to a New York audience in one of your best characters?” “No, and I am not very fond of the part of Henrietta Maria either.” “What are your favourite characters?” “Oh, I hardly know. I love nearly all I play; but I don’t like to cry, and I cannot help it in ‘Charles I.’ I like comedy best,—Portia, Beatrice, and Letitia Hardy.”

Ellen Terry made her first appearance before an American audience as Queen Henrietta Maria at the Star Theatre, New York, on Tuesday, the 30th of October.

ELLEN TERRY

"The Herald," on the following morning said: "Miss Terry received a most cordial reception, and made so excellent an impression upon the audience, both by her charming personality and admirable acting, that long before the evening was over she had firmly established herself in the good graces of her new public, who more than once at the fall of the curtain invited her, with every enthusiastic mark of approbation, to come before the house to receive in person its acknowledgments and congratulations. Her success was unquestionable. In the second act the curtain fell on the conclusion of one of the grandest results that any actress has achieved in New York for years." "The Tribune" considers Ellen Terry's performance "the most surprising and absorbing of the night." Even such praise as the above was faint as compared with the raptures into which the New York press went over Miss Terry's performance. "The comedy of this actress," declared "The Tribune," "is delicious. Her voice

IN AMERICA

is perfect music. Her clear, bell-like elocution is more than a refreshment,—it is a luxury. Her simple manner, always large and adequate, with nothing puny or mincing about it, is one of the greatest beauties of the art which it so deftly conceals.” According to “The Evening Post,” “it may almost be said that she presented the actual Portia whom Shakespeare drew—a most winning figure of elegant womanhood, full of spirit, tenderness, and grace. Her success with the audience was immediate, and her reputation in England no longer matter for wonderment.” A writer in “Harper’s Magazine” tells us that “Miss Terry’s Portia was not Minerva, nor was it :

‘She

The foundress of the Babylonian wall,
The Carian Artemisia strong in war,
The Rhodope that built the pyramid,
Clelia, Cornelia, with the Palmyrene
That fought Aurelian.’

It was none of these, but Shakespeare’s Portia, noble, maidenly, and gay,—an ‘in-

ELLEN TERRY

expressive she' whose destiny might well be committed to a golden casket for the contest of princes. Graceful womanly dignity and sparkling simplicity characterized Miss Terry's Portia. She was as charming to the spectator as to the Prince of Morocco or to Bassanio, and nothing could be more refined and gently feminine than her demeanour throughout the selection of the casket, and nothing more happily arch than her action and aspect in the ring scene with which the drama ended."

From New York the Lyceum company proceeded to Philadelphia and Boston, and Ellen Terry's triumph grew from more to more. Of her performance of Ophelia, "The Boston Traveller" said: "The Ophelia of Miss Ellen Terry was supremely delicious. In the early part it was artless and girlish, yet womanly withal. It was sweet, tender, graceful, loving and lovable. As a piece of acting, it was 'stuff'd with all honourable virtues.' It was very powerful in the mad scene in the fourth act, and yet

IN AMERICA

it was not more powerful than it was refined and intellectual; and while it may be looked upon in every respect as a perfect piece of dramatic art, it was faithful to life, and true to the best instincts of womanly nature." "The Boston Transcript" contented itself with saying that "here one had nothing to criticize, no one trait to praise more than another. Such a wonderful embodiment of the poet's conception is quickly praised, but never to be forgotten." In Chicago Ellen Terry was received with unbounded enthusiasm in "The Belle's Stratagem," "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," and "Much Ado About Nothing." As Letitia Hardy, in the first of these plays, Miss Terry, in the opinion of "The Chicago Times," "showed to better advantage than in any other character in which she has appeared, except in some parts of that of Portia. She catches the gay and rollicking spirit, with the faint dash of sentiment of the quaint old English comedy, with singular accuracy and grace. Nothing

ELLEN TERRY

finer or more full of true artistic feeling and accomplishment has been seen on the stage for many years than her assumption of hoydenish pertness, and her exquisite bits of by-play—the exuberant overflow of genuinely feminine triumph—with which she marks her detection of the success of her scheme. This was skilfully connected, too, with the almost hysterical nervousness with which she entered upon the experiment. . . . Miss Terry has a peculiar voice. It is a voice that is laden with some of the sweetness of a whisper and some of the softness of a sigh. And Miss Terry herself looked very charming as she tripped through the garden of comedy in an old-fashioned dress of the last century—a dress of shell-pink and silver-gold brocade. Perhaps the secret of her fascinating manner is that the artificial atmosphere of the stage has not chilled her warm, womanly nature, as it has that of many actresses. Her soul speaks through her eyes as well as through her lips, and

IN AMERICA

her joyousness is Grecian, not English, in its spontaneity. She sang, 'Where Are You Going, My Pretty Maid?' with a playful gentleness that was as grateful as the scent of lilacs to one who had almost forgotten what that scent was like. Her Letitia Hardy is Shakespeare's Rosalind in a drawing-room."

* * * *

The criticisms which I have quoted above will serve to show the attitude which the most capable critics in the great cities of America took up towards the impersonations of Ellen Terry. They are neither more nor less eulogistic than the many hundreds from which they are chosen. And not only were the professional critics delighted with Miss Terry's acting. She had many flattering proofs of the pleasure which her performances had given to such representative men as Henry Ward Beecher and Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the literary and artistic societies of the cities in which she played vied with one another in

ELLEN TERRY

doing her honour. The enthusiastic welcome which Ellen Terry received on her first visit to America has been repeated with the same cordiality on the occasions of her most recent visits, and it is not surprising that she has come to regard the United States, not as a foreign country, but as a second home.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

WE have now traced the career of Ellen Terry from the night of her first appearance on the stage as Mamillius in "The Winter's Tale" to the date of her performance in the most recent of the magnificent series of productions to which the Lyceum owes its splendid position as chief among the theatres of England. Step by step we have followed her from the sharp days of the essay to these the brilliant ones of the conquering. As we read the enthusiastic eulogy of her critics, and remember that their eulogy is endorsed by countless thousands of playgoers among the two great English-speaking nations of the world, we may be inclined to consider her as the spoiled darling of fortune and to regard her career as a serene and unbroken pro-

ELLEN TERRY

gress towards fame. Nature, it is true, exceedingly kind to her, lavishing on her as it did, those gifts and graces with which it is almost impossible for any woman to win for herself a commanding place among the actresses of the world. But if this little book shows anything at all, it shows clearly that the goal was not reached before the bitterness of disappointment had been tasted ; that rare talent had been utilized only at the expense of ceaseless and indomitable industry. To define the genius of Ellen Terry as the capacity to take finite pains would be beside the mark, it is nevertheless true that this capacity accounts in no small degree for the triumphant character of her long record. Whatever she did, she did with her mind, and though, like other mortals, it was not given to her to command success, she spared herself no pains to deserve it. Proud of the art which she professed, believing firmly in the dignity of the actress, calling, she has ever done it that prac-

CONCLUSION

form of homage which is unceasing service, and she has been rewarded according to the faith which was in her.

It would be gross flattery, which is at once a vulgar and cruel form of kindness, to pretend that Ellen Terry has not had her failures, but at the same time it is remarkable how few those failures have been when compared with the sum total of her successes. Ambition has sometimes led her to strive for triumphs which were out of her reach, but she has at least known how to fail with dignity, sometimes even with charm. Her Juliet may not have been the Juliet of our dreams, but it was far removed from the ordinary and the commonplace: her Lady Macbeth may not have satisfied those to whom the Siddons tradition is dear, but even they would allow to Ellen Terry's impersonation a certain measure of fascination. It is not, after all, the actor who occasionally falls short of our ideals that we have the right vehemently to blame, but rather the one who actively

ELLEN TERRY

destroys those ideals and leaves us for ever disillusioned. Lack of physical power, want of technical resource, we may forgive even if we cannot overlook, but lack of taste and intelligence have small title to pardon. Stupidity in an actor is a crowning and an inexcusable sin. Assuredly it is one of which no man can say that Ellen Terry has been guilty, and for this, if for nothing else, she is entitled to our gratitude and our respect.

An address presented to Sir Henry Irving some years ago by the members of Dublin University contained a honeyed compliment to Ellen Terry. "Her genius," it declared, "is fatal to criticism, for it transforms critics into lovers." When we have discounted the exaggerated gallantry of this phrase, we find that it possesses an appreciable remnant of truth. Ellen Terry's buoyancy, her all-pervading gracefulness, the charm of her singular voice, in which laughter and tears seem to be in everlasting chase, the innate femininity of all she

CONCLUSION

attempts, do in fact to some extent disarm cold and searching criticism. She possesses that magnetic personality which compels sympathy in spite of oneself and makes one almost insensitive to small shortcomings. One's reason is at the mercy of one's sympathy : in the eagerness of admiration, one forgets to analyse and is content merely to enjoy. Herein lies no small part of the actor's power to illusion us and make us live for the moment in a world of airy nothings. We are told by some critics who are nothing if not superior, that the actor's business is by no means a dignified one. It is pointed out that his work has little more permanency than a snowflake or a rose leaf, that, once dead, nothing is left of him but a bundle of memories. It may be so, but sometimes those memories have a rare fragrance all their own and are dearer to us than the loftier and more substantial records of heroes, saints and sages.

INDEX OF PLAYS AND CHARACTERS

- 'Amber Heart, The," 194 *et seq.*
"Antipodes, The; or, the Ups and Downs of Life,"
52.
Ariel, 10.
Arthur, Prince, 9, 33.
"Atar-Gull," 41, 42.

Beatrice, 147, 168 *et seq.*
"Becket," 232 *et seq.*
"Belle's Stratagem, The," 51, 158, 259.
"Bells, The," 191.
Blanche Haye, 88, 90.
Britannia, 50, 51.
"Brothers," 90, 91.
"Buckstone at Home," 49.
"Butterfly," 132.

Camma, 153 *et seq.*
Cardinal D'Alby, 7.
Catherine, 248.
Catherine Duval, 220.
Catherine, Empress, 251.

ELLEN TERRY

"Charles I.," 124, 126, 128, 129.

Clara Douglas, 76-79.

Clementine ("Atar-Gull"), 41.

Clementine ("Robert Macaire"), 173, 174.

Cordelia, 10, 31, 229 *et seq.*

"Cup, The," 150 *et seq.*

Cupid, 43.

"Cymbeline," 241.

"Dead Heart, The," 61, 218 *et seq.*

Desdemona, 159.

Diana, 43.

Dictys, 44.

"Distant Relations," 37.

"Dora," 11, 132.

"Double Marriage, The," 53.

Duke of Norfolk, 7.

Ellaline, 195 *et seq.*

"Endymion," 43.

"Eugene Aram, Fate of," 123.

"Fairy Goldenstar, The," 31.

"Faust," 186, 190, 191.

"Faust and Marguerite," 31.

"Game of Romps, A," 14.

Georgina Vesey, 94.

Gertrude, 46.

"Governor's Wife, The," 43.

Guinevere, 237 *et seq.*

INDEX

"Hamlet," 129, 132, 160, 184, 259.

"Happy Pair, A," 79.

"Harlequin, or the White Cat," 31.

Helen, 161.

Henrietta Maria, Queen, 124, 126, 255.

"Henry VIII.," 7, 224 *et seq.*

Hero, 49.

"Home for the Holidays," 37.

"House of Darnley," 95, 96.

"Household Fairy, The," 60.

"Hunchback, The," 11, 161.

"If the Cap Fits," 32.

Imogen, 241 *et seq.*

"Iolanthe," 146, 147.

"Iron Chest, The," 16.

"It is Never Too Late to Mend," 68.

Jeanette, 198.

Josephine, 193, 194.

"Journeys End in Lovers Meeting," 235, 236.

Julia ("The Hunchback"), 11.

Julia ("The Rivals"), 51.

Juliet, 165 *et seq.*, 265.

Kate, 90, 91.

Katherine ("Katherine and Petruchio"), 54, 59.

Katherine, Queen ("Henry VIII."), 226 *et seq.*

"Katherine and Petruchio," 54, 59, 110.

Karl, 31.

ELLEN TERRY

- "King Arthur," 237 *et seq.*
"King John," 9, 33.
"King Lear," 31, 229.
Lady Anne, 129.
Lady Helen, 16, 129.
"Lady of Lyons, The," 80, 81, 86, 116-118.
Lady Macbeth, 199 *et seq.*
Lady Soupise, 236, 237.
Lady Touchwood, 51.
Letitia Hardy, 158, 259-261.
"Liberty Hall," 15.
"Lilian Vavasour," 93, 132.
Little Nell, 15.
"Little Treasure, The," 46-49.
"Louis IX.," 7.
Lucy Ashton, 223.
"Lyons Mail, The," 198.

Mabel Vane, 87.
"Macbeth," 199 *et seq.*
"Madame Sans-Gêne," 247.
Madeline, 52.
Mamillius, 24, 25, 27.
Margaret, 186 *et seq.*
Mary Meredith, 51.
"Masks and Faces," 86.
"Medicine Man, The," 251.
"Merchant of Venice, The," 69, 76, 132, 135, 147,
259.
"Merry Wives of Windsor, The," 9.
"Midsummer Night's Dream, A," 27, 31, 46.

INDEX

"Money," 76, 80, 94.

Mrs. Honeyton, 79.

Mrs. Mildmay, 54.

"Much Ado About Nothing," 49, 147, 168, 172, 176,
259.

"Nance Oldfield," 235.

"New Men and Old Acres," 91, 92, 93, 131.

Olivia, 96-98, 100, 101, 184, 185.

Ophelia, 10, 113, 114, 116, 133, 258.

"Othello," 159.

"Our American Cousin," 51.

"Ours," 88, 90.

Pauline, 80, 81, 83-85, 116, 119.

Peggy, 191.

"Perseus and Andromeda," 44.

"Peter the Great," 249 *et seq.*

Philippa Chester, 64, 66, 68.

Portia, 69, 71, 74, 75, 84, 135 *et seq.*, 139, 256, 257.

Puck, 28, 29, 31.

"Raising the Wind," 191.

"Ravenswood," 222.

"Richard III.," 129.

"Rivals, The," 51.

"Robert Macaire," 173.

Robin, 9.

Robust Invalid, 15.

"Romeo and Juliet," 11, 162, 165, 168.

ELLEN TERRY

Rosamund, 234.

Rose, 54.

Ruth Meadows, 123.

"School for Scandal," 132, 147.

"Spirit of the Future," 45.

"Still Waters Run Deep," 54.

"Sunlight and Shadow," 14.

Susan, 68.

Sylvia Wynford, 251.

"Tempest, The," 10.

Titania, 28, 29, 46.

"Twelfth Night," 10, 176, 177, 183.

"Two Roses," 106.

"Victims," 96.

Viola, 10, 177 *et seq.*

"Wandering Heir, The," 64.

"Werner," 193.

"Winter's Tale, The," 23, 26, 263.

"Wrinkles," 87.



CHISWICK PRESS:—CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.